



## Dublin City Play Strategy 2021 - 2025

*Realising the vision for Dublin as a child-friendly, playful city  
.....and then came Covid 19.*

**Debby Clarke - Dublin City Council Play Development Officer**

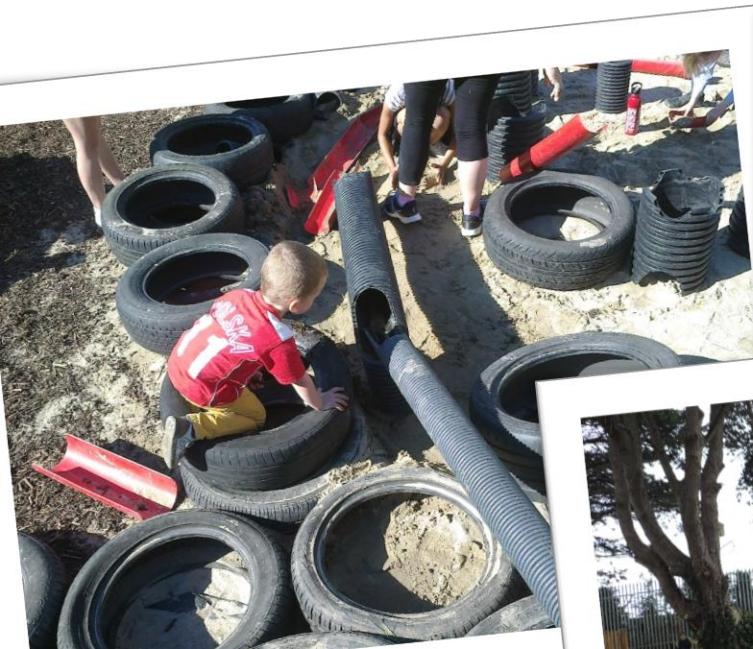
**Parks & Landscape Services  
01 2225396, 086 8150997**



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## Why do we need a play strategy

Children and young people play all the time and everywhere as theorists Iona and Peter Opie state “*Where children are is where they play*” (Opie & Opie 1999). They play in their homes, gardens, at the doorstep, streets, schoolyards, playgrounds, open spaces, parks, near rivers or forests or other wild places. All of these places inspire them and spark imagination and creativity. Many of the fields, small rivers or waterways where Dublin children played in the past are no longer accessible for play. Improving and increasing formal play facilities is an important element of supporting play. Additionally, places retaining their wild charm and attractiveness to children must be protected and preserved so that children and young people can continue to have access to play experiences in their local streets and neighbourhoods that include natural and wild places and spaces.



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# Dublin City Play Strategy 2021 – 2025; Pollinating Play

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.

## 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.



## Strategy Principles & Values

The Dublin City Play Strategy is underpinned by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) General Comment 17 Article 31; *the child’s right to play***

The strategy vision, mission, principles, themes and actions are informed by the definition of play set out within **UNCRC General Comment 17 on Article 31; *the child’s right to play***

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

- The principle of ‘Play Sufficiency’ has been adopted from recommendations from GC17 and in particular the **2010 Wales ‘Play Sufficiency Duty’** as an example of best practice in developing a comprehensive action plan that is both quantitative and qualitative by encompassing:
  - Play facilities
  - Play Services
  - Permissions and opportunities for children and young people’s **everyday freedoms and everyday play experiences** in local streets neighbourhoods , doorstep etc. – making conditions right for play

***Our Vision; Dublin Will be a child-friendly and playful city where all children and young people can enjoy and fully exercise and enjoy their right to play***



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## Policy Context

### Influential Policies and Strategies

- **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:** Dublin City Play Plan 'Play here, Play there, Play everywhere'
- **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 – 5 National Outcomes
  - Active and Healthy
  - Achieving in all Areas of health and Development:
  - Safe and Protected from Harm
  - Economic security and opportunity
  - Connected and Respected

## Supporting & Guiding Policies & Strategies

- **2010** Children & Families Wales Measure – Play Sufficiency Duty (2010)
- **2012** Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit - *Creating a Play Friendly Wales*
- **2013** General Comment 17, UNCRC Article 31; the child's right to Play
- **2016:** The Heart of Dublin – Dublin City Centre Masterplan DCC – Public Realm Strategy
- **Present;** The Dublin City Parks Strategy (2019 – 2022)
- **Present:** Dublin City Play Strategy (2021 – 2026); 'Pollinating Play'.



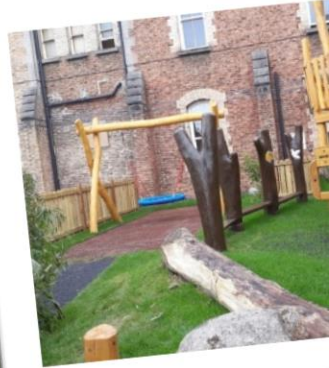
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# Challenges

Realising the strategy vision and successful implementation of strategy action plan will present a number of challenges for the city.

## **Key challenges set out within General Comment 17 Article 31:**

- Lack of recognition of the importance of play for children and young people
- Including 'the voice of the child' within actions taken in creating a child friendly and playful city.
- Providing sufficient equality of access to play opportunities for children and young people of all ages and abilities.
- Unsafe & hazardous environments.
- Resistance to children and young people's use of public space
- Balanced approach to Risk and Safety.
- Poor access to nature
- Utilitarian approach; for educational achievement.
- Overly structured recreational programme schedules.
- Neglect of Article 31 in development programmes.
- Lack of in cultural and artistic opportunities for children
- Growing role of digital media & technology.
- Marketing and commercialisation of play.
- **Implementing alongside developing the Play Strategy**
- **And now the impact of Covid 19 restrictions and how to we play out of this Pandemic**



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# Key Guiding Documents Supporting Play Strategy Themes and Action Plan



## United Nations General Comment No. 17 Article 31; the *child's right to play* (2013). 'the forgotten right'

**Article 31 - Leisure, Recreation & Cultural Activities:**

*States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*

*States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.*

- Further articulates the intent and purpose of article 31
- promotes play as a 'right'
- Highlights obligations for governments, roles and responsibilities for private sector in planning use of space & guidelines for parents and carers.
- Identifies 'play' as vital to human behaviour and survival
- Recommends rich and varied play environments
- Clearly identifies the issue of accessibility and inclusion
- Recommends that countries adopt the legal principle of 'sufficiency' as a policy narrative.

**Protection** – of the child as a species, adaption, resilience, survival, coping mechanism, brain architecture

**Participation** – in society, consulted, listened to – seen and heard

**Provision** – more than just play facilities - providing the 'right' conditions for play to happen (Lester & Russell 'Right to Play')

## ➤ The Welsh Government published the 'Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 (Section 11) 'Play Sufficiency Duty'

- A model of government commitment to the concept of GC is provided within the Wales Play Sufficiency Assessment Duty (2010).
- Followed by Wales Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit in 2012

### Sufficiency as a Policy Narrative

- Aligns with UNCRC GC 17- Article 31
- Introduces discussion regarding legislation that addresses the principle of 'play sufficiency' as a legal principle
- Demonstrates commitment to children's participation, consultation and research.
- Broad examination of play provision e.g. facilities, services, opportunities and everyday play experiences
- Informs Strategy themes &
- Headings for proposed DCC Play Sufficiency Assessments



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# Review of Current Provision; Quantitative/Play Facilities

## Distribution

- 120 public parks of various size; open spaces and parkland
- Incorporates approximately 67 public playgrounds
- **Ongoing Development of Play Infrastructure that includes hierarchy and typology of play facilities;**
  - Destination Playgrounds,
  - Local Community Neighbourhood Playgrounds
  - Local Community Playgrounds
  - Play lots/Doorstep Play facilities
- **‘Guidance for Outdoor Sports & Play - Beyond the Six Acre Standard’**
- **Provision and distribution** is based on Central Statistic Office figures for 2016 Identifying area of deficit based on population density of children under 14 years of age (figures to be updated)
- **Citywide Greening strategies** – address play at design stage
- **DCC housing** department provide approximately 64 local playgrounds

## Management & Maintenance

- Annual, Routine and Operational Playground Safety Inspections
- Staff Training & Development
- Assigned Budgets Per District
  - General Repairs and maintenance
  - Upgrading & Renewal
  - Capital Projects

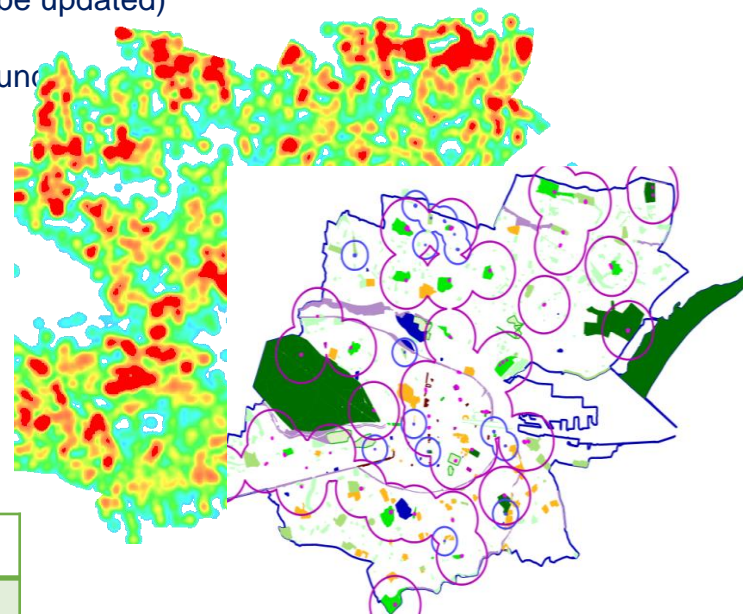
## Geographical Information Systems(GIS)

- accessibility zones of 500m for standard
- playgrounds and 1000m for destination playgrounds.

(Pink Blobs) within 500m (Blue) and 1000m (Pink) Buffer Zones (pink)

**BUT THERE IS MORE TO PLAY  
THAN PLAYGROUNDS!**

<b>North West</b>	<b>13 Playgrounds</b>
North Central	13 Playgrounds
South East	17 Playgrounds
South Central	14 Playgrounds
Central	11 Playgrounds



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# Developing the Strategy

**The Dublin City Play Strategy 2021 – 2026 ‘Pollinating Play’ is both a quantitative and qualitative approach to supporting children’s play.**

The play strategy will move beyond the standard of fixed playgrounds to explore the value of more organic spaces for play such as parklands, greenways, open spaces, incidental spaces in the built and natural environment – Street Play

## Trending /Themed Responses

- Play for all ages
- Play for Older Children
- Accessible and Inclusive Play Opportunities'
- Play in Local streets and neighbourhoods
- Involve children in Mapping planning and design

# Review of Community Engagement

The consultation process that preceded the Dublin City Play Strategy placed particular focus on children and young people through a wide range of consultative methods. Parents/carers, children and young people gave their views by participating in the following:

- Approximately 600 completed online survey **‘Have your say about play’**,
- Pop-up play consultations in a number of the city’s main parks
- Organisations/ youth groups and the city council’s network of recreation centres - workshops
- **National Playday** - large number of children participated in short interviews and playful and creative workshops
- Dublin City’s Comhairle na nOg - **ongoing**
  - 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**



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**Dr Carol Baron**



# A Strategy and action plan that will future proof 'play' for Dublin's Youngest Citizens

The Dublin City Play Strategy (DCPS) includes an action plan based on a set of themes with specific focus on adopting '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 communities through *positive childhood experiences so that they can*

***play now, play more and play better !***

***“The central question in these pages is what a sustainable, successful, healthy city looks like. The answer? It looks like a child-friendly city”.***

Gill.T. *Cities Alive* - ARUP

Broaden Scope of play provision that is both qualitative and quantitative by encompassing time, space and 'permissions' as 3 main conditions that allow play to happen.

- Facilities playgrounds, parks , open spaces, streets and public space
- Play Services; community play schemes, after-school clubs etc
- Affordances through existing and planned design, networks and characteristics of urban landscape.

**Adopting Principle of Sufficiency as a methodology for monitoring, review, evaluation and active research regarding the ongoing implementation of strategy action plan.**

- **5 x Themed Policy Statements**
- **Strategic Action Plan Timeframe 2021 – 2025**



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# 1. Develop an awareness of play and its value and importance in the everyday lives of children and young people

A play-led approach to creating a child-friendly and playful city

In response to General Comment 17, Article 31; adopt the principle of 'play sufficiency' to monitor progress and overall impact of the play strategy

Adopt the theory and concept of 'Playwork Practice' as a play led approach to providing for play

Highlight the benefits and importance of 'risk' and 'challenge' in play

## Engagement Focus & Actions for Dublin City Council –

The focus for Dublin City Council is to implement actions that assists in promoting awareness of the meaning and importance of play, maintain links across city council departments and with partner agencies in order to initiate inter-departmental and interagency working and continue to consult with children and young people on the design of play spaces and their access to opportunities to engage in self-directed informal play.

### Actions:

**Awareness & Promotion:** information, training and toolkits

**Play Sufficiency:** implement principle

**Consultation:** Active Research with children and young people

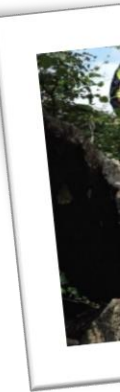
**Events:** Annual Programme – Playday

**Advocacy:** Play Manifesto, input from young people

**Promoting Playwork Principles:** play-led

**Irish Play Safety Statement:** risk in play

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## 2. Create an effective citywide play infrastructure through collaborative design that enhances and responds to children and young peoples existing infrastructure.

Review and scope of Dublin City Council's current play infrastructure

Adopting implementing the principle of 'play sufficiency' to monitor and evaluate play facilities and everyday opportunities for play

Integrated actions within Dublin's play, greening, public realm and arts strategies that will support the creation of a child-friendly and playful city

Support and encourage the development of play-friendly communities to provide time and space and permission for 'everyday street play' opportunities and experiences.

The effects of Climate Change on Children's Play

Play Services – supervised play provision

## Engagement Focus & Actions for Dublin City Council

Implementing Play Sufficiency Assessments and Initiate cross and inter-departmental and external partner agencies to explore and identify new and novel ways to address barriers to play and identify and plan interventions that support the right conditions for play to happen.

### Actions:

**Quality Assessments:** Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit

**Play Sufficiency Awareness and Training:** Interdepartmental , outside agencies and community groups

**Funding:** Organisational capital budget that respond to 'play sufficiency assessment findings

**Addressing Play deficits:** update GIS Data Destination Playgrounds: Improve and Increase this type of play facility e.g. 5 x districts.

**Playground Development Framework:**

**Maintenance and Repairs:** in place

**Addressing Rapid Urban Development & Climate Change:** Utilising school ground for play.



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### 3. Place a key focus on accessible and inclusive opportunities for play for all children and young people

Fulfilling obligations under General Comment 17 Article 31 by supporting play for all children and young people requiring particular attention

Highlight the creative, social, physical and emotional benefits of play for older children/teenagers that includes opportunities for risk, challenge and social interaction.

In general, supporting children living in a diverse multi cultural city e.g. children poverty, experiencing homelessness , rom ethnic minority groups or those coming from situations of conflict, humanitarian and natural disasters, older children/teenagers,, equality of access for girls.

#### Engagement Focus & Actions for Dublin City Council

Actively support the issue of equal opportunities regarding children's play by placing particular focus on those marginalised from society through race, ethnic origin, physical and intellectual disabilities or socio-economic backgrounds

##### Actions:

**Inclusion:** collaborative working with DCEDIY to develop toolkit

**Improved and increased opportunities for play for older children/teenagers;** play areas, hang out spaces , public space, local neighbourhoods



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## 4. Work in partnership to support schools, early education settings to improve and increase child-led play experiences.

Work in partnership to support schools to facilitate play as a right for children and young people by improving and increasing child-led play opportunities

Promote and support the value and importance of facilitating outdoor, unstructured self-directed play in early childhood education and childcare settings

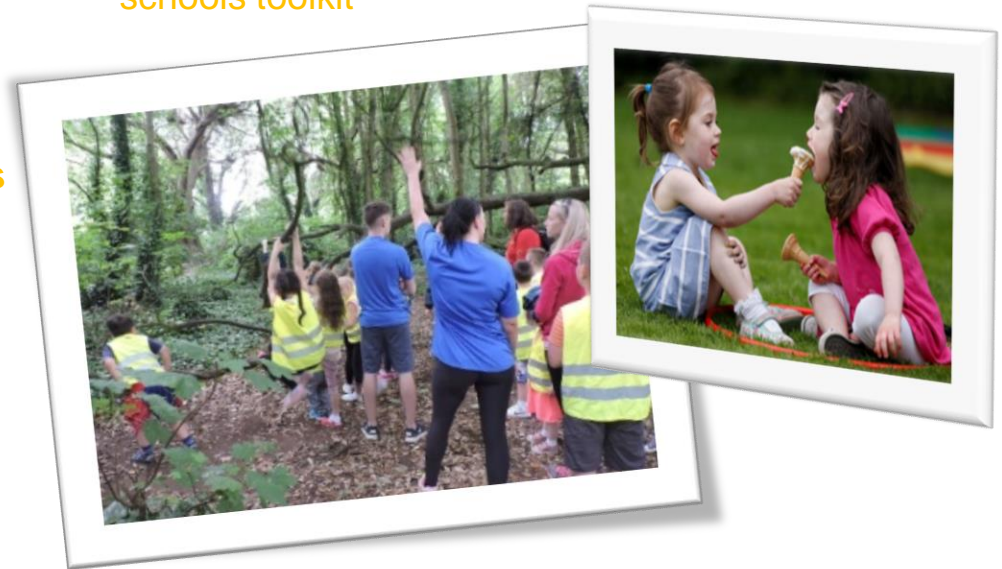


### Engagement Focus \$ Actions for Dublin City Council

Include the matter of "Play in Schools" as part of the Dublin City Play Strategy and develop actions points that will support the implementation of this type of initiative. Moreover, liaise with key *Education Boards* to promote the importance of the 'play' as a key element of the school day.

#### Actions:

**Benefits of improved and increased opportunities for Play in Schools:** Play friendly schools toolkit



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## 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

Supporting and responding to paragraph 2 Article 31 regarding equality and ease of access to engage in cultural life and the arts

Interconnections between Play, Cultural Life and the Arts

### Engagement Focus for Dublin City Council

Formalise cross-departmental and partnership working to implement actions and initiatives based on the theme of access to interactive and playful arts heritage and culture as a medium for play for children and young people.

#### Actions:

**Art and Play:** identify ways to work collaboratively with DCC Arts Offices

**Playful Galleries, libraries, Museums & Heritage Sites:** Liaise with Hugh Lane Gallery & Library Development



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## NEXT STEPS

### MAY 2021 :

- Distribution of draft document for approval/agreement
  - Dublin City Council Departments
  - Dublin City Play Strategy Partners
  - Review of draft by Gloucester University  
Dr Wendy Russell (Visiting Fellow)

### JUNE/JULY 2021 :

- Dublin City Council Adoption of the Play Strategy
- Final Design and Production of Document
- Launch and distribution of Final Document
- And ongoing promotion and implementation of Play Strategy



## **‘Pollinating Play’; the Dublin City Play Strategy 2021- 2026**

*The Dublin City Play Strategy is underpinned by Article 31; the child’s right to play. The implementation of this new strategy will present the opportunity for Dublin City Council to lead the development of an interdepartmental, multi-agency, comprehensive and meaningful action plan to support children and young living in and visiting Dublin city.*

*This will engage Dublin in a ‘re-enchantment’ with play through understanding and support of ‘children’s wisdom’ as experts in the creative and imaginative use and adaptation of the built and natural environment, to create a child-friendly and playful city !*



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