



Making your play strategy inclusive

Who should read this?

This document is aimed at those who have responsibility for developing or contributing to writing or revising local play strategies. It can be used both by those who have a general role in the planning process, and by those who have a specific commitment to championing the rights of disabled children through the strategy. Whilst equality for disabled children is its principal concern, many of its suggestions will also apply to the full involvement of other traditionally excluded groups.

Why should we include disabled children in play?

- It's **all** children's right to play!
 - o The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)
- It's **all** of our responsibility to remove barriers that exclude disabled people from our services and to promote equality between disabled and non-disabled people
 - o The Disability Discrimination Act (1995 and 2005)
 - o KIDS has a '**Legislation, Policy and Guidance**' factsheet on the website which is regularly updated for your use and information (www.kids.org.uk/resources).
- The national Play Strategy (2008) states that 'It is a requirement that the play spaces developed by local authorities with the £235 million capital funding (as part of the play pathfinder and playbuilder programme) must be fully inclusive and accessible for all disabled children and young people.'
- Play is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and personally directed. Therefore good playwork practice should be inclusive if you are following the eight Playwork Principles

How can we develop inclusive play through our local play strategy?

- Start by having a clear and shared definition of what 'inclusive play' is A definition used by KIDS from Alison John (KIDS Associate Trainer) is:
 - Inclusive provision is open and accessible to all, and takes positive action in removing disabling barriers so that disabled and non-disabled children can participate.

KIDS uses definitions which reflect the **Social Model of Disability**. We believe that promoting and working with social model understanding highlights the need to remove disabling barriers rather than focusing on individuals' impairments. For further information on terminology information refer to the KIDS document: '**Choosing our Words**' available to download from the KIDS website (www.kids.org.uk/resources).

- Inclusion should be a theme that is threaded throughout the entirety of a play strategy. It should not be an after thought or something that is only considered in one section of the strategy.
- Be aware of the demographics of those living in your local authority. How many disabled children, children from black and minority ethnic groups, looked after children, young carers (and other disadvantaged groups) are there, and why are they not currently included in play services? Consult with them and their families (in an appropriate and accessible way). '**Our Play Our Choice**' is a KIDS briefing paper that may support your consultation work.
- As well as identifying the challenges that exist to including all children in play, identify good practice that can be used as case study material for others to follow.
- Assess the accessibility and inclusivity of services (with an understanding of how these terms are different) to explore what appropriate changes or support could be made through the play strategy. KIDS has developed the '**All of Us- Framework for Quality Inclusion**' which can be used for this purpose.
- Find and involve 'inclusion champions' within the local authority. If you don't have an inclusion champion, maybe it's a role your play champion could take on – making sure whilst they are supporting play they are supporting play for all children. If you cannot find someone to fill this role, consider getting external input from specialists in inclusive play such as KIDS to support the development of inclusion in your services. Even if you have an inclusion champion its important to remember that inclusion is everyone's responsibility.
- Those developing the play strategy must be representative of different voluntary, private and statutory agencies, and include people who have control or influence over budget expenditure. This will include people who work with disabled children, young people and their families, but it should be recognised that play, and therefore inclusive play, impacts on almost all local authority departments from health to housing, planning to public transport. Make sure your inclusive play strategy is publicised across authority departments as a tool to support better lives in your community.

- Where staff are present to facilitate play experiences, their attitudes towards disabled children and adults will probably be the biggest single influence on whether inclusive play develops. They need to have had inclusive play training, therefore consideration of workforce development is important. Please see the KIDS '**Training and Publications** Flyer' for more information.
- Although funding isn't always necessary for inclusion to work, it's still useful to make links to other funding within local authorities (such as Aiming High for Disabled Children (2008) and PCT monies) that could be effectively linked together to create better inclusive services. Please see the KIDS briefings '**Aiming Higher for Inclusive Play**' and '**Making the Links**' for more information.

There is no single practical step that makes inclusion happen - although a real commitment to wanting it to happen is undoubtedly the surest foundation. The whole strategy should therefore be imbued with a commitment to inclusion, and each part of it should take account of and make sense to disabled children and their families.

Download KIDS' briefings at: www.kids.org.uk/briefings

Please contact the Playwork Inclusion Project (PIP) for more information.

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