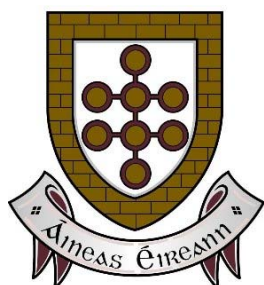

Meath Local Authorities

Play Policy
2008 – 2012



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council



Contents

1 Foreword

2 Executive Summary

3 Introduction

4 Policy Context

5 The Current Situation

6 Population Issues

7 Public Consultation

8 Vision Statement, Values and Principles

9 Objectives and Actions

10 Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

1 Foreword

Play is a vital part of development for all children and as such all children should have equal opportunities to access the appropriate play environment. I welcome this Play Policy for County Meath as it is a vital guide for us all over the next few years as we strive to make our environment a safer and better place to play.

I know that this policy will benefit all of the children of the county as it will raise awareness of the importance of play and will keep play in the minds of those that make decisions about the physical environment.

I would like to thank all those that were involved in the development of this play policy and particularly the members of the Play Policy Steering Group who have worked so hard to ensure that the policy is comprehensive and relevant. I would also sincerely like to thank those that participated in the public consultation process, particularly the children.

Finally I would like to thank Joe Saunders, the consultant on this project and the Community & Enterprise Section of Meath County Council for their commitment to the development of this policy for County Meath.

Kind regards,

Cllr. Liz McCormack

Cathaoirleach,

Meath County Council

Meath County Council and Meath County Development Board acknowledge that children benefit enormously from play and that play is a vital part of a child's development. Play also benefits communities by offering opportunities for integration thereby enhancing community spirit.

In order to guide the future development of the play environment in Meath we established a Play Policy Steering Group comprising the key local stakeholders (See Appendix) which has worked hard over the last nine months to develop this Play Policy for County Meath.

The policy sets out the role of the CDB, the Local Authority and other organisations in promoting play in the county. It outlines how all stakeholders can work together to ensure that play is prioritised in County Meath.

I would like to thank all of those who were involved in this project. I would like to thank those members of the public who were so helpful in giving their time and views and I would particularly like to thank the children for their valuable contribution.

I am delighted with this policy and I firmly believe that it will serve to enhance the quality of play for all of the children of County Meath.

Kind regards,

Tom Dowling

Meath County Manager

2 Executive Summary

In 2004, the government produced Ready, Steady, Play! A National Play Policy, making Ireland one of the first countries in the world to produce a detailed national policy on children's play. This Policy has become a framework for the development of a better environment for the nation's children and for generating greater funding for play opportunities.

Meath Local Authorities have now produced a local play policy with the assistance of partner agencies and through consultation with communities, schools, voluntary groups and children across the county. This is a comprehensive framework for the development of children's play in the county over the coming years.

The Vision outlined in the Policy is "to provide quality, accessible, age appropriate and safe play opportunities and to ensure the play needs of every child in Meath are met."

The child is at the centre of this Policy. The principles underpinning the approach to play are – inclusion, partnership between agencies dealing with children, promotion of a child-friendly environment, consultation with children, universal access for all abilities, community involvement and quality standards.

The policy outlines the many excellent services and facilities already in place in the county that provide for children's play but it also identifies the gaps where communities and children need improvement in the play environment. This has been done through analysis of population trends, local consultation and an audit of existing facilities.

The Meath Play Policy provides for the setting up of an Inter-Agency Play Advisory Forum that will ensure integrated strategic planning in relation to the development of the play environment in the county. It will adopt annual programmes based on the vision and objectives contained in this Policy. Through this process, we aim to realise the ambition that the play environment for every child in Meath will be strengthened and improved within this Policy's timeframe of 2008 – 2012.

3 Introduction

Why a Play Policy for County Meath?

Play and recreation opportunities are essential for children. The opportunity to play in a safe but social and stimulating environment is a key determinant of well-being. Children's need for play remains constant across time and territories but the opportunities to fulfil that need change according to many contexts.

Whilst children spontaneously and naturally engage in play, we are all familiar with the factors that are changing and, in many cases, constraining opportunities for children to engage in active play.

These include

- Changes in the natural and built environment, increases in traffic volumes, development and changes in land use have resulted in a less child friendly environment with less accessible open spaces in which to play.
- Fear of litigation limits the areas open for children to explore.
- The changing nature of working and family life has reduced time for parents to encourage and participate in play activities.
- There is growing evidence to suggest that young people are adopting increasingly sedentary lifestyles such as watching television or playing computer games.
- Dietary changes and increased transportation make for more sedentary lifestyles and growing levels of childhood obesity. The National Taskforce on Childhood Obesity recently estimated that there are 300,000 children obese or overweight in the Country, a figure increasing by approximately 10,000 per year.
- The Irish climate is sometimes a deterrent to outdoor play
- Increasing concerns about the protection and safety of children further curtails their movements and sphere of activity.

Whilst these trends fundamentally challenge and change the way children play, these could actually stimulate us to create new opportunities for play in keeping with our times.

If we accept that children's play is both necessary and valuable, we must all take responsibility for ensuring that it is encouraged. This applies both to regulators and policy makers as well as to citizens in their lifestyle choices.

In recognition of many of these factors and the changing nature of Irish society, the government adopted a National Play Policy called Ready, Steady Play in 2004 and has asked all local authorities to adopt a similar policy for their own area.

Meath Local Authorities recognise the need to promote, prioritise and formalise the provision of play opportunities and wishes to work in partnership with children and other agencies to achieve this end. It has therefore adopted this play policy in order to help create an environment in Meath where children can play freely and in safety.

The process of drafting the Policy has included the following elements: the setting up of an inter-agency steering group comprising organisations with special interest and expertise in the area of play; the recruitment of an external consultant by public tender to prepare the plan in conjunction with the steering group; background research on relevant policy, best practice and demographic issues; a wide ranging consultation process with children, communities and special interests as

described in section six; adoptions of actions in section eight by relevant lead agencies; adoption of Policy by Meath Local Authorities.

What do we mean by Play?

There are many definitions of Play that help to capture the essence of the activity. Examples include:

- Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child.
- Play is what children do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way, for their own reasons without externally imposed rules. Successful play provision should offer children and young people as much choice, control and freedom as possible within reasonable boundaries.

These definitions emphasise spontaneity and freedom of choice. In drawing up policies for play, these aspects of play opportunities and facilities are considered central along with the safety and developmental needs of the child.

A rich play environment that facilitates play as described here would allow access to a range of experiences such as:

- The challenges of a varied physical environment with opportunities for chasing, hiding etc
- Play with natural elements such as earth, water, sand
- Movement such as running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing, juggling,
- Manipulation of natural and fabricated materials
- Stimulation of the senses
- Experiencing change in the natural environment - daily, seasonal
- Social interaction
- Experimentation with identity- dressing up, role play
- Experiencing emotions

In short, as identified by Súgradh, play can SPICE up the life of the child:

Social development (relationships, taking turns, interacting, sharing, meeting other abilities and cultures)

Physical (climbing, swinging, coordination, motor, balance)

Intellectual (concepts, reasoning, problem solving, quantities, abstract ideas)

Creative (symbols, imagination, making things)

Emotional (playing out feelings of liking, disliking, fear, confidence, success and failure)

Scope

This policy applies to indoor and outdoor non-commercial public play opportunities in County Meath.

The role of Meath Local Authorities in relation to the provision of play opportunities goes beyond the development of physical infrastructure specifically designated for play. Planning for play

requires that we ensure that recognition of our children's right to play in safety is built into all aspects of both our natural and built environment. This has implications for how we plan our residential areas, our roads, our towns and villages, our parks and access to the broad range of natural amenities that Meath has to offer. It involves recognising creative benefits of play and ensuring this is promoted through our arts, library and community services.

Maximising opportunities for play is not solely the remit of the local authorities. It has implications for local communities and agencies with responsibility for health, education, social inclusion, childcare, community safety and community development. The Local Authorities recognise the need for an integrated approach to the development of play opportunities and this has been reaffirmed in the County development Board's review document, 'Meath in Transition'.

The objective of this document is to clarify how the Local Authorities will enhance the play environment for children in Meath and how we will work with others to facilitate this. An inter-agency group has guided the drafting of this Policy. This has comprised the Health Service Executive, Meath Community & Voluntary Forum, Meath County Childcare Committee, Meath Local Authorities, Meath Local Sports Partnership, Meath Partnership, Meath Vocational Education Committee, Meath Youth Federation and RAPID.

The Play Policy provides a framework regardless of the funding environment. As available funding may change from year to year, a newly-convened Meath Play Advisory Forum will oversee the implementation of the Policy and adopt Annual Play Plans to take account of changing needs and enhance the local play environment through yearly programmes of action.

The focus of the Play Policy is on children aged up to twelve years. The government has recently published a National Recreation Policy, Teen Space, in 2007 that is aimed at an older age group. Meath County Development Board in the forthcoming review of 'Le Cheile' and 'Meath in Transition' will consider objectives and actions for the delivery of a Recreation Policy.

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4 Policy Context

Statutory recognition of the need to promote appropriate play opportunities for children can be seen at international, national and local levels viz. the United Nations, the Irish Government and Meath Local Authorities, Meath Childcare Committee, Meath Local Sports Partnership etc.

INTERNATIONAL

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child commits signatory countries to:

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

The Convention also commits countries to “encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for.....recreational and leisure activity.”

NATIONAL

Current national policy derives from the National Children’s Strategy ‘Our Children – Their Lives’ which was published in 2000.

The Strategy’s vision is:

“An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential”.

The three National Goals of the Strategy are:

Goal 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.

Goal 2 - Children's lives will be better understood; their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services.

Goal 3 - Children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development.

The main constituent parts of the National Children’s Strategy are:

The National Children’s Office 2001,

National Children’s Advisory Council 2001,

Office of the Ombudsman for Children 2004,

Dáil Na nÓg / Comhairle Na nÓg,

National Play Policy 2004 (aimed at younger children)

Teen Space, the National Recreation Policy 2007.

The Strategy’s philosophy in relation to the role of play in children’s lives is clear:

“Children are more than mere consumers of services, such as education and health, they also need opportunities to relax, have fun, exercise their imagination and cultivate a sense of the aesthetic.” p.46

Hence, the Strategy has adopted the following objective:

“children will have access to play, sport, recreational and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood.” p.57

The Strategy also notes that there is a “very evident need to develop play facilities as part of local government development under the National Development Plan.” p.57

The latter reflects recent evidence that Irish children, as they get older, take less exercise and that television, video games and the internet play a greater part in their socialisation.

National Play Policy

Ready, Steady, Play: A National Play Policy was published in March, 2004, making Ireland one of the first countries in the world to produce a detailed national policy on play.

The objectives of the National Play Policy are:

- To give children a voice in the design and implementation of play policies and facilities
- To raise awareness of the importance of play
- To ensure that children's play needs are met through the development of a child-friendly environment
- To maximise the range of public play opportunities available to all children, particularly children who are marginalised, disadvantaged or who have a disability
- To improve the quality and safety of playgrounds and play areas
- To ensure that the relevant training and qualifications are available to persons offering play and related services to children
- To develop a partnership approach to funding and developing play opportunities
- To improve on, and evaluation and monitoring of, play provision for children in Ireland.

LOCAL

Meath County Development Plan 2007 -2013

The current Meath County Development Plan facilitates the provision and siting of services and facilities necessary for the community including recreational spaces and playgrounds.

Relevant policies and objectives of the County Meath Development Plan 2007 – 2013 include:

Social Objective 3

To assist in the provision of community and resources centres and youth clubs/cafés and other facilities for young people by the identification and reservation of suitably located sites, including sites within the landbanks of the Local Authorities, by assisting in the provision of finance for their development through the provisions of the Planning & Development Act 2000, and the use of Local Area Action Plans/ Framework Plans to ensure provision is made for such facilities as the Council consider appropriate, in consultation with relevant local interested parties (*See Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013, page 285*)

Social Policy 1

To support the provision and even distribution of a range of social infrastructure to meet the needs of the County's population in liaison with other statutory, voluntary and community groups

Social Policy 2

To ensure that where practicable, community, recreational and open space facilities are clustered, with the community facilities being located in local centres or combined with school facilities as appropriate. Community facilities should be located close to or within walking distance of housing, accessible to all sectors of the community and facilitate multi-use functions through their design and layout.

Social Policy 3

The Planning Authority will strive for meaningful consultation with community groups and youth agencies in the development of any significant public space that occurs within Large and Moderate Growth Towns and in particular in relation to the Local Authority's own development (see section 5 for list of large and moderate growth towns).

Social Policy 4

The Planning Authority shall seek the efficient delivery of community and social facilities commensurate with the needs of the resident population and that these facilities are developed contemporaneously with residential development.

Social Policy 5

To require as part of all new residential and commercial developments, and in existing developments where appropriate, provision to be made for facilities including local/neighbourhood shops, childcare facilities, schools and recreational facilities, and to seek their provision concurrent with development.

Social Policy 6

To implement the Development Contribution Scheme, which will form the basis for the improvement of existing community facilities and the funding of new community facilities.

(See Meath County Development Plan, 2007 – 2013, pages 271 - 272)

Meath County Council has adopted the Barcelona Declaration on accessibility for all regardless of physical ability and is reflected in SOC POL 15 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007 - 2013 which states:

“To promote the participation and empowerment of all through an inclusive approach to service provision in line with Equality Legislation and the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 and the National Disability Strategy”.

It is also noted in the Meath County Development Plan 2007 - 2013 that the Barcelona Declaration aims to encourage provision for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community. The declaration contains agreed actions to be undertaken by Local Authorities in pursuit of barrier free design in all environments.

Meath Local Authorities have adopted Child Protection Guidelines that inform all aspects of the Councils' interaction with and services to children.

'Le Chéile - An Integrated Strategy for Meath to 2012'

There are a number of policies prescribed in 'Le Cheile' (Meath County Development Boards 10 year Strategic Plan) which are of relevance to the play environment including:

3.3.2.3 Enhancement of social/cultural infrastructure provision (outreach health, housing, childcare, recreation, arts and culture) on a balanced basis throughout the county in conjunction with residential development. Supporting actions include the upgrade of community facilities, especially for youth and the provision of parks and playgrounds.

3.3.5.3 Achieve social inclusion and parity of access to services and facilities.

This objective contains many supporting actions relevant to play, recreation and youth provision.

A review of Le Chéile was carried out and its findings were presented in a report entitled 'Meath in Transition'. In this report, the County Development Board gave commitments to develop and implement a Play Strategy for Meath. *(Meath County Development Board, Meath in Transition p. 37)*

Meath Local Sport Partnership's (MLSP) Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

The Meath Local Sport Partnership's Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012 also contains relevant objectives including:

- To increase levels of participation rates and quality experiences in sport and physical activity

Meath Local Sports Partnership places special emphasis on children and young people.

Meath County Childcare Committee's Strategic Plan 2007 – 2010

Meath County Childcare Committee's Strategic Plan 2007 – 2010 contains a number of key objectives on child development which promote children's access to quality play opportunities in childcare, family and community settings.

Meath Partnership

Meath Partnership is the new delivery agent for the Rural Development Programme and Local Development Social Inclusion Programme. Their policies and priorities include rural and village enhancement, disadvantaged youth and social inclusion. Youth facilities and programmes will be part of their Programmes of Action once the company's operational phase begins in late 2008.

5 The Current Situation

Where do we find play facilities in County Meath?

Wherever children are

Play is defined as “freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child”. We can, therefore, find play facilities wherever children are afforded the right to play and are given a safe place to exercise that right. Children use their whole environment for play. We can think of traditional places such as homes, streets, gardens, parks, playgrounds and public amenities.

In recent years, some play spaces have disappeared or are underused as a result of building pressure, increased traffic and use of the car for short journeys to school and shops, fear of strangers, etc.

On account of this and also because of the increasing awareness of the positive role of play, new spaces are also emerging. We can see this at the supermarket crèche, doctors’ surgeries and increasingly in commercial premises.

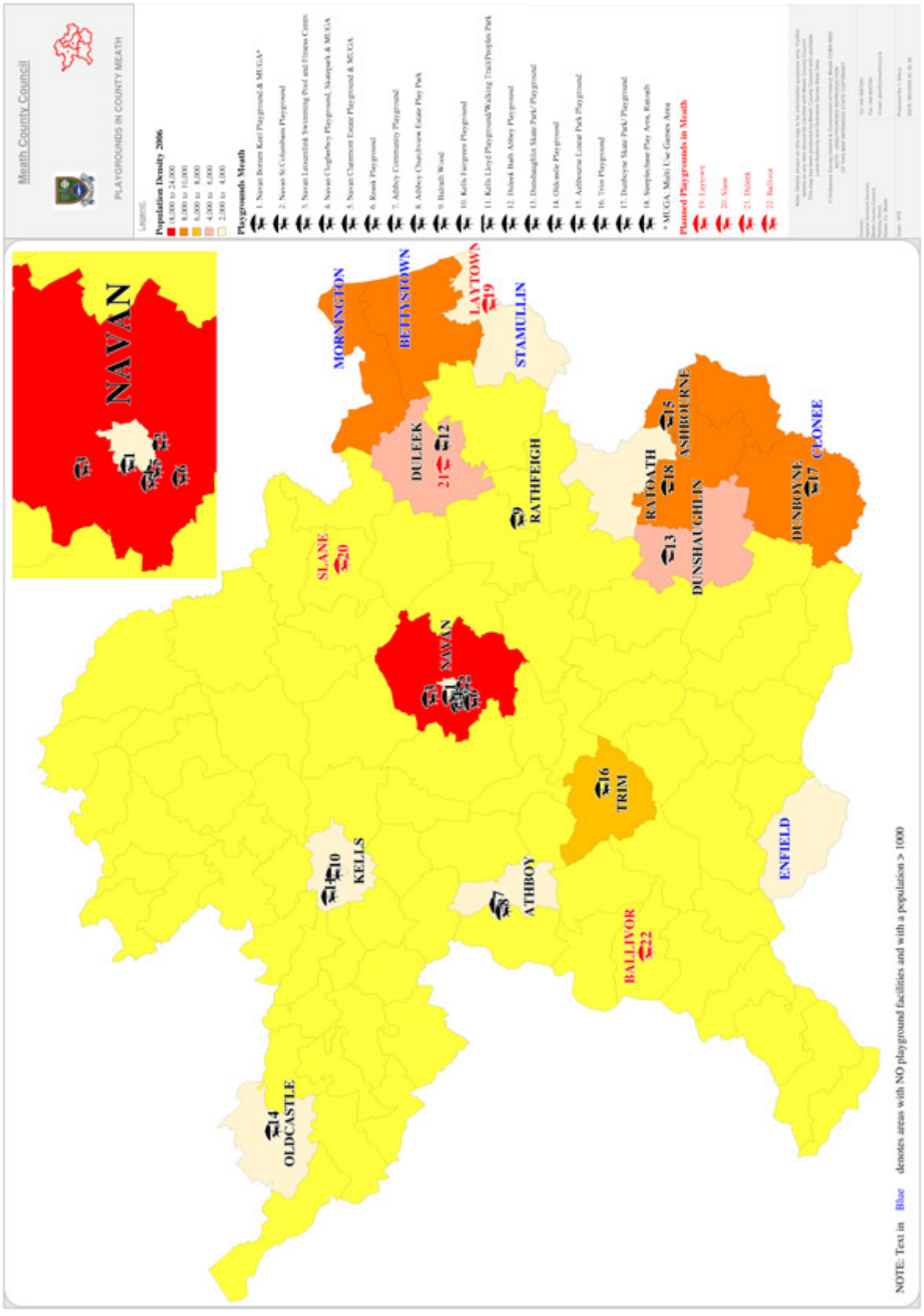
There is also a tendency for play to become more private. A drive along any Irish road (rural and urban) will reveal a vast increase in expensive equipment e.g. trampolines and playhouses, in private gardens.

Local Authority Services

Playgrounds

There are more than 20 playgrounds either already installed or planned for the county with a population of 162,831 persons. This gives one playground for approximately every 8,000 people in the county.

See map on next page illustrating location of play facilities in County Meath.



Usage levels of playgrounds vary, based on a number of factors:

- Demographic factors in the area
- Distance from newer housing estates
- Opportunities for independent access by children due to traffic
- Lack of nearby residential cluster
- Proximity of complementary services
- Security issues and occurrences of anti-social behaviour and bullying – in this regard, Meath County Council are undertaking a pilot CCTV security scheme at the Ratoath playground. A review of this pilot scheme will inform the development of future policy in this matter.

As well as playgrounds, Meath Local Authorities provide a number of other services and amenities that facilitate children's play and some structured activities. These include parks, libraries and the county arts service.

Meath County Council Library Service (MCCLS)

The delivery of services to children of all ages forms an integral part of the MCCLS role and functions. Public libraries provide children with a safe and accessible environment in which they can develop a love of books and reading and receive support with the development of their literacy and information skills. Public libraries are key non - commercial neutral spaces in the community that act as seedbeds for other educational, cultural and recreational purposes.

MCCLS has thirteen branches and a dedicated primary schools library service which delivers services to all 119 primary schools in the county.

Staff organise and deliver a range of children's events and activities to complement their core activities. The annual Children's Book Festival organised by library staff involves upwards of 70 events and visits by national and international children's authors and is attended by over 3,000 children. The annual Reading Mission run as part of the Summer Programme with the Arts Office reaches a further 2,000 children . Book clubs are run in each library and the schools library service runs the Dads and Lads programme.

Meath Arts Service

Meath County Council's Arts Office current Development Plan places an emphasis on sustainable development and creative diversity in youth arts practice. Recent initiatives in this area include the development of a Youth Theatre model for the county and the Annual Summer ArtsFest which has operated at multiple venues countywide, catering for over 500 young people per year.

Sports and Play

Whilst play's central characteristics of being personally directed and not externally organised distinguishes it from some sports activities, there is considerable overlap especially at younger ages groups and in non-competitive settings. Many of those who provide sporting opportunities for children are helping also to provide play.

MLSP is heavily involved in the promotion of play. One of its central objectives is to 'facilitate opportunities for increased play through the delivery of programmes and to assist in the provision of facilities.'

(Meath Local Sports Partnership, Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012)

It does this through a number of initiatives that are providing opportunities for children's play in the county including

- Buntús (a physical activity programme) in 113 primary schools involving 1056 teachers and 20,000 children
- Buntús Start in 40 childcare and pre-school centres to date
- Support for holiday and multi-activity camps
- Girls in Action Programme
- Active Leadership programmes in youth environments

Community Halls and Sports Facilities

Besides school facilities, there are 298 indoor and outdoor sporting and community facilities in the county. These include 24 Community Centres, 72 GAA facilities, 36 soccer grounds, 10 multi-activity centres and other sporting venues. Many of these facilitate some provision of children's play, including summer camps, youth service activities etc.

(See Facilities Directory at www.meathlocalsportspartnership.ie)

In many cases, indoor facilities are underused and could enhance the overall play environment for younger children, especially given the Irish climate.

School Playgrounds

School Playgrounds are traditionally a place of active play where many children get their first opportunity for free play and socialization with a large group of peers. As such, school playgrounds form a major part of the play infrastructure of any county and it is imperative that outdoor spaces at schools are used to their potential.

In rural areas, the school is often the centre of community services. Synergy and funding may be more easily achieved if school, childcare and community interests unite to develop outdoor play space. This will require resolution of insurance, maintenance and supervision issues.

In 2005, the Department of Education & Science asked all schools to urge Trustees and Boards of Management to give serious consideration to requests for school facilities to be made available to local communities for play and recreation purposes where possible.

This circular has the capacity to bring school playgrounds into wider usage by non – school groups. It opens the possibility of such usage if the responsibilities and liabilities of Boards of Management and trustees are recognised and addressed. The Department has advised that the following arrangements are put in place:

- There is a licence agreement between the Board and the group using the premises.
- The agreement should be underwritten by a regularly reviewed contract.
- Any agreement should be in conformity with the lease of the building.
- There is an arrangement to cover additional costs for insurance, heating, lighting, cleaning and maintenance of the areas used by the group.
- All external groups should hold public liability cover and adequate insurance
- Health and Safety issues are addressed.
- Child Protection Guidelines are followed.

The use of school playgrounds and the general provision of playground facilities are particularly pertinent in rural areas and small towns. Today, few rural children walk to school and most small

rural schools have no gymnasium. In such areas, the school may be the focal point of community infrastructure alongside a community, church and childcare facility.

It is unlikely that each of these will be in a position to provide adequate outdoor play areas. For these reasons, restrictions on play activity in schoolyards or restrictions of out-of-hours usage impacts disproportionately on children in rural areas and small towns. Conversely, significant advantages and economies of scale may be gained if schoolyards are given wider usage. This will require communities to engage with their schools to set up the necessary structures and procedures to provide for such usage.

Many schools playgrounds in Meath have recently benefitted from the Playground Markings Packs, provided by Meath County Council and the HSE, which encourage children to take part in traditional playground games through ground markings and layouts.

Healthcare Settings

The Health Services Executive has a major role in children's play at policy and implementation level. The main areas of involvement are:

Pre-School Regulations: the HSE is responsible for monitoring compliance with Pre-School Regulations. This includes all childcare settings which require notification i.e. providers with more than three children in attendance. The Regulations require the provision of an outdoor play facility for all services.

Health Promotion: The HSE Health Promotion Unit supports the following programmes that assist children to play and be active:

- Ag Súgradh Le Chéile programme that provides workshops to encourage active play between parents and children. This is operated through the schools.
- Buntús
- Playground Markings & Games resources for schools

Childcare Facilities

There are 244 notified childcare facilities in the county, all of whom play a vital role in children's play development and socialisation. The Pre-School Regulations now require the provision of an outdoor play facility for all newly-built services.

The Childcare Committee promotes the provision and use of play in the following ways:

- By supporting community childcare groups in funding applications under the National Childcare Investment Programme
- Promotion of Buntús Start, Buntús Refresher and Active Leadership programmes in 40 childcare centres to date – providing games training and resource kits for 3 – 5 year olds
- Promotion of the Spraoi le Chéile programme – traditional games and rhymes with physical activity
- By supporting employers in the sector to get staff involved in FETAC training and Síolta workshops so as to improve skills including play skills

Ballivor Community Childcare Services has recently received funding to purchase a playbus that will offer a countywide service, especially in rural areas and to groups that have difficulty in accessing play and childcare opportunities.

Meath County Childcare Committee is in the process of developing a Sensory Play Project that will be suitable for all children aged four to eighteen years including those with autism and learning difficulties. This project will tour to schools in 2008 – 2009 where groups of children will work with an artist using touch, feel and smell in a special sensory play project.

Youth Clubs and Youth Services

Whilst most Youth Clubs are aimed at older children and teenagers, they provide play and activity-based services to a significant number of children under the age of fourteen. There are over seventy youth clubs or youth service projects registered with County Meath VEC.

Youth Service Providers and their affiliate clubs and units available to young people in County Meath include:

- Meath Youth Federation: Ashbourne Youth Together, Kells Youth Project, Navan Youth Together, Athboy Summer Camp, Meath Autism Network, Athboy Youth Club, St Catherine's Youth Club Junior and Senior (Gibbstown, Navan), Summerhill Youth Club, Teenage Kicks Oldcastle, Clonmellon Youth Club, Trim Clubba Lubba Youth Club, Enfield Youth Club, Cula Bula Trim, YAMO
- Foróige: Bellewstown, Carnaross, Cormeen, Curragha, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, East Meath, Kilcloon, Kildalkey, Meath Hill, Mosney, Ratoath, Syddan (Lobinstown), Zion (Navan)
- Óige na Gaeltachta: Deagóirí Bhaile Ghib, Ionad Buailleadh isteach Rath Chairn, Óige Rathchairn, Óige Bhaile Ghib
- Scouting Ireland units: Skreen, Kilbride, Kildalkey, Longwood, Dunboyne, Cois Ferraige, Ashbourne, Navan, Trim, Ballivor, Kells, Dunshaughlin, Athboy, Ratoath
- Irish Girl Guides, Ladybirds and Brownies units: Kells Ladybirds, Macella Guides Trim, Navan Brownies, Plum Tree Brownies, Round Tower Kells, St John's Girl Guides, St Seachnall's Girl Guides, Trim Guides, Trim Rangers, CGI Moynalty, Oldcastle, Ashbourne
- Federation of ARCH clubs (for people with special needs, their siblings and friends): Trim Arch Club, Navan Arch Club
- Others: Julianstown Girls Friendly Society, Boinn Youth Club. Many Residents Associations also run youth programmes, summer camps etc

6 Population Issues

The 2006 Census of Population enumerates Meath as follows:

Population of County 162, 831

The population of the county's electoral areas are as follows:

Ceannanus Mór 26,988, Dunshaughlin 38,432, Navan, 38,891, Slane 32,126, Trim 25,568.

90,332 (55.5%) persons live in towns with more than 1000 persons. 72,499 (44.5%) live outside such settlements.

County Meath has experienced population growth of 21.5% since the 2002 Census, the second highest rate of increase in the country. This compares with a national growth rate of 8.2% for the same period. The rate of positive natural increase (births minus deaths) was 12.5 per 1,000, the fourth highest nationally and reflecting a young age profile of the county. Over the decade 1996 – 2002, the county's population increased by 48%

In 2006, there were 31,506 children under 12 years in the county, equal to 19.3% of the total population. This equates to an average of 2,625 children in each year group with a population peak at the younger end e.g. there are 2,214 children aged 11-12 years and 2,843 aged 0-1 year with even increases in the intervening age groups.

The fastest growing large centres of population in the 2002 – 2006 period were the Environs of Drogheda (124%), Ratoath (91%), Laytown – Bettystown – Mornington (60%), Ashbourne (34%). Navan and Kells increased by 28% and 19% respectively.

Smaller settlements experienced significant growth also – Clonee Village (478%), Stamullen (220%), Enfield (102%), Ballivor (53%), Duleek (49%), Athboy (44%), Oldcastle (40%), Slane (33%).

Navan, Ratoath, Stamullen show steep increases at the very young groups, reflecting comparatively high recent birth rates.

Concentrated settlements outside towns with legally defined boundaries are known as 'census towns' whose boundaries are determined for Census purposes only by the CSO. These settlements are smaller than the electoral districts in which they are situated and are defined as clusters of 50 or more occupied dwellings. In Meath, the largest 'census towns' are Navan, Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington, Ashbourne, Ratoath, Trim, Dunboyne and Kells.

The populations of all settlements with over 1000 persons are shown here shown here along with the number of children aged under 12 years.

Population of 'Census Towns' and Electoral Divisions

Census Town	Population	Increase 2002 - 2006	Relevant Electoral Districts (ED)	Persons under 12 years	Percentage under 12 years
Navan and Environs	24851	28%	Navan Urban, Rural * and Ardraccan*	5099	20.5%
Laytown- Bettystown- Mornington	8978	60.4%	Julianstown* St. Mary's*	1906	21.2%
Ashbourne	8528	34%	Donaghmore Kilbrew*	1419	16.6%
Ratoath	7249	91.1%	Ratoath*	2026	27.9%
Trim and Environs	6870	16.5%	Trim Urban Trim Rural*	1315	19.1%
Dunboyne	5713	6.5%	Dunboyne*	1365	23.9%
Ceannanus Mór and Environs	5248	18.7%	Kells Urban Kells Rural*	961	18.3%
Environs of Drogheda	4787	124.4%	St Mary's* Julianstown*	1099**	23%**
Dunshaughlin	3384	10.5%	Dunshaughlin	763	22.5%
Duleek	3236	48.9%	Duleek* Ardcath*	635	19.6%
Stamullen	2487	219.3%	Stamullin*	627	25.2%
Athboy	2213	43.9%	Baile Atha Bui* Grennanstown	428	19.3%
Enfield	2161	101.6%	Innfield*	453	21%
Oldcastle	1316	40.4%	Oldcastle*	230	17.5%
Ballivor	1212	52.8%	Killaconnigan*	333	27.5%
Slane	1099	33.5%	Slane*	215	19.6%
Clonee Village	1000	478.0%	Dunboyne*	151	15.1%

*Part of Electoral District. ** This figure is an estimate: due to the composition of this Census town across EDs and County Boundaries, a definitive figure is not possible using CSO software. The estimate is extrapolated from the age profile of all parts of the St Mary's ED that is within Meath. The part of Julianstown ED in the Census Town is not considered as it is statistically insignificant with a total of 13 persons.

Geographical distribution

The spatial distribution of the population has implications for provision in that many children must and do travel to visit playgrounds, parks and other facilities. Whilst provision within walking distance is desirable, most children do not travel independently to playgrounds and larger amenities. This will continue to be the case even after improved levels of provision. This also highlights the need for policies at local level which facilitate play space and opportunity e.g. creative landscaping, Home Zones, creative traffic solutions, etc.

(Note: A home zone is a traffic-calmed street. Car parking is organised in such a way that allows areas be multi-functional, simulataneously accommodating play, seating areas, flower beds etc. Home Zones are an attempt to strike a balance between traffic and everyone else who uses the street, the pedestrians, cyclists, business people and residents.

Home Zones work through the physical alteration of streets and roads in an area. These alterations force motorists to drive with greater care and at lower speeds. Many countries support this with legislation allowing the Home Zones to enforce a reduced speed limit of 10 miles an hour. The benches, flower beds, play areas, lamp posts, fences and trees used to alter the streets and roads offer many additional community benefits to the Home Zones and are considered to enhance the beauty of an area and increase the housing prices.)

An ideal type of provision, as described by Súgradh, might be “a network of play spaces, from landscaped green spaces in housing areas, through neighbourhood parks with some play equipment to larger Town Parks with more facilities is ideal, linked by footpaths and cycle ways so that children can travel safely through their neighbourhood”.

Settlement and Development Priorities

A Settlement Strategy Hierarchy exists within the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. This aims to locate population growth and channel development in line with the principles of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines.

METROPOLITAN AREA	
Moderate Growth Towns	Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace, Kilcock & Maynooth Environs
HINTERLAND AREA	
Large Growth Towns	Drogheda (Environs) & Navan
Moderate Growth Towns	Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin, Kells & Trim
Small Growth Towns	Athboy, Duleek, Enfield, Laytown – Bettystown – Mornington East, Oldcastle, Ratoath & Stamullen
Key Villages	Ballivor, Longwood, Nobber, Slane and Summerhill
Villages	Baile Ghib, Carnaross, Carlanstown, Clonard, Crossakiel, Donacarney, Donore, Drumconrath, Gormanston, Julianstown Kentstown, Kilbride (Dunshaughlin Electoral Area), Kildalkey, Kilmainhamwood, Kilmessan, Mornington, Moynalty, Rathcairn & Rathmolyon
Graigs (Rural Clusters)	See Appendix II (of County Development Plan)

(Meath County Development Plan, Table 4, p.40)

The Settlement Strategy includes the following priorities:

- The promotion and channelling of development in the first instance to Navan, Drogheda Environs and the Dunboyne/Clonee/Pace Rail Corridor which are the three major designated areas of growth in the county.
- The continued development of Ashbourne on a sustainable basisalong with the development of the environs of both Kilcock and Maynooth....The continued development of Kells and Trim will be balanced with the protection of the inherent qualities of these Heritage Towns
- The Development Plan has identified Dunshaughlin as a Moderate Growth Town and pending the recognition of this designation in the review of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, the quantum and scale of additional residential households will be revisited.
- Excessive growth in Laytown –Bettystown – Mornington East will be controlled
- Appropriately-scaled, character-reinforcing development in smaller rural towns and villages

(cf. Meath County Development Plan pp. 40 – 41)

SS OBJ 1 of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 also states that it is an objective of the Council to prepare Local Area Plans for the urban centres in the table below. These will replace the individual Written Statements and Detailed Objectives for Towns and Villages contained in the 2001 County Development Plan.

Large Growth Towns*	Drogheda (Environs)
Moderate Growth Towns*	Dunboyne / Clonee / Pace Corridor, Dunshaughlin, Kilcock**, Maynooth** & Ashbourne
Small Growth Towns	Duleek, Ratoath, Athboy, Oldcastle & Enfield
Key Villages	Slane, Ballivor, Longwood, Summerhill, Nobber
Villages	Baile Ghib, Carnaross, Carlanstown, Clonard, Crossakiel, Donacarney, Donore, Drumconrath, Gormonston, Julianstown, Kentstown, Kilbride (Dunshaughlin Electoral Area), Kildalkey, Kilmainhamwood, Kilmessan, Mornington, Moynalty, Rathcairn & Rathmolyan

**note that Plans for Navan, Kells and Trim were already in place at time of adoption of County Development Plan*

***in conjunction with Kildare County Council*

(Meath County Development Plan, Table 7 p.59)

GAPS

Those settlements where there are gaps in playground provision are:

- Large Growth Towns – Drogheda Environs
- Moderate Growth Towns – Kilcock and Maynooth Environs, Clonee
- Small Growth Towns – Stamullen, Enfield, Laytown
- Key Villages - Ballivor, Longwood, Nobber, Slane and Summerhill. Of these, only Slane and Ballivor have over 1000 persons.

Currently, playgrounds are in development in Laytown, Ballivor and Slane. The remaining towns and villages are to develop Local Area Plans (Drogheda & Environs is underway) that will guide the development of play and recreation provision. These LAPS will be informed by the Meath Local Authorities Play Policy.

7 Public Consultation

An inter – agency group, comprising the Health Service Executive, Meath Community & Voluntary Forum, Meath County Childcare Committee, Meath County Council, Meath Partnership, Meath Local Sports Partnership, Meath Vocational Education Committee, Meath Youth Federation and RAPID has guided the drafting of this Policy.

The policy is also informed by the views of children, adults, community groups, schools and interested individuals who shared their views about the current play environment in County Meath and what they would like to see. They participated in the following ways:

- Consultative meetings were held in each of the county’s electoral areas at Ashbourne, Duleek, Navan, Oldcastle and Trim and at the Meath Festival of Cultures.
- Children attending the Meath Library Service’s summer programme were surveyed and consulted at these locations also, using age-appropriate exercises and methods.
- All primary schools and community groups in the County were invited to make a submission.
- Consultations were held with Comhairle Na nÓg and Comhairle Na bPáiste representatives in the County.
- Special consultations were held for childcare, disability and special needs groups.
- An email facility playpolicy@meathcoco.ie was set up and publicly advertised.

The consultation meetings were facilitated by staff from Meath County Council, Meath Local Sports Partnership and an external consultant.

Highlights and themes

The views, ideas and requests expressed in the consultations have been incorporated into all sections of this policy document, especially into the Objectives and Actions (section 8) but it is worth stating separately some of the issues that arose.

The majority of children experience County Meath as a good place to grow up with plenty of positive play opportunities. Parents have a similar experience of raising children in the county. Those attending the consultations and making submissions agree that there is a good quality of life for children in Meath.

The investment of recent years that has increased the number of playgrounds in the county to 20 has been warmly welcomed and most of these experience high usage. Obvious gaps were identified and these were in line with the findings in Section 5 on Population Issues. In terms of the future management and use of playgrounds, the following views are commonplace

- The siting of playgrounds and play spaces is crucial – parking, safe access on foot, visibility and hence safety from anti-social behaviour and stranger danger need to be incorporated into criteria for choosing location.
- More equipment is needed for older age group and greater development of MUGAs (multi-use games areas) in play environment so as to provide safe and interesting areas for all children.
- Surfaces need to be improved so as to cater for wheelchair and buggy users and others with mobility difficulties.
- Range of challenges need to be addressed – especially opportunities for those with physical difficulties.

- Some areas currently lack easy access to play facilities and investments should take greater account of the need for a tiered approach that includes local and neighbourhood facilities that can be accessed on foot as well as facilities in flagship towns.

Children's preferences for ideal play areas include:

- Freedom from traffic and bullying or anti-social behaviour
- Physical challenges, good surfaces, hiding places and opportunities for creativity
- Close to home and opportunities to meet with friends
- Flagship facilities needed in bigger towns
- Equipped facilities linked to spaces for team games in natural environments
- Lots of colour
- Opportunities for all physical and intellectual abilities to play together
- Signage and information that is child-friendly
- Good, safe surfaces

Many children have expressed the behaviour of older teenagers engaged in anti-social behaviour as a common deterrent to playing in public spaces

At an overall planning level, many people feel that there is a need to designate play space at the commencement of new developments, rather than later. This would place play at the centre of development and avoid conflict over siting issues when facilities come to be developed. An agreed definition of play space would need to be adopted to make this happen,

8 Vision Statement, Values and Principles

Meath Local Authorities and its partner agencies subscribe to the following definition of play:

“Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child.”

Play provides children with opportunities to enjoy freedom and exercise choice and control over their actions, to test boundaries and explore/assess risk, to foster independence and self – esteem and to share, negotiate and learn to respect the rights of others.

Our traditional vision of children’s play is of endless hours of running, jumping, dressing up, hiding, falling, laughing and occasionally crying. The visible and audible presence of children making playful use of public spaces is a sign of a healthy community - but these sounds are being challenged by many changes in recent years. These include the increase in traffic and car use, time poverty amongst guardians, stranger danger and the increase in sedentary lifestyles and car use.

Meath Local Authorities recognise the right of children to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to be consulted on the provision of play facilities. The local authorities are committed to working in partnership with communities and other organisations to develop play opportunities for children and young people throughout the county.

Opportunities for play should be age appropriate, taking into account the changing need of the child as he or she grows older and becomes less reliant on parental or adult supervision or facilitation. Within the county, it is aimed to provide a range of opportunities for children under five years (such as play groups, parent and toddler access to recreation centres such as swimming pools, play in libraries, younger areas in playgrounds etc) and older children (such as support for youth service activities and sports clubs, older areas in playgrounds, specific library activities etc).

Any effort to improve children’s play opportunities must recognise that most play does not take place on sites formally designated as play spaces. When we discuss public investment and play provision, there is a danger of focussing too much on off-the-shelf fixed play equipment. Yet children often place more value on landscaping, sand, water, bushes and other natural elements.

Social changes have left many children with less access to play and dependent on adults to transport them to play facilities. Through play, children acquire skills and abilities that can be learnt in no other way and there is growing evidence about the effects of play deprivation.

Non – participation in certain types of play activity can lead to:

- poorer ability in motor tasks
- lower levels of physical activity, fitness and well-being
- poorer ability to deal with stressful situation and events
- poorer ability to assess and manage risk
- poorer social and negotiation skills

Certain children have traditionally had significantly worse access to good play opportunities because of their physical ability, socio-economic background, gender or membership of the Travelling Community. This policy is committed to the pro-active promotion of opportunities for play for all children as well as integrated, rather than segregated play. A number of the actions

proposed are designed to bring about increased play opportunities for specific, disadvantaged groups.

For children with disabilities, an important consideration is that not every piece of equipment in a play area or facility should be accessible but that accessible equipment should always be located alongside non-accessible equipment so that children of all abilities can play together and get to know each other. Meath County Council has adopted the Barcelona Declaration on accessibility for all regardless of physical ability.

Vision

Our vision is to “provide quality, accessible, age appropriate and safe play opportunities and to ensure that the play needs of every child in Meath are met”.

Values

In support of that vision and recognising the centrality and necessity of play in children’s lives, Meath Local Authorities are committed to the following values:

Children are recognised as a central part of the community of Meath

Every child, irrespective of gender, background, cultural or racial origin, or individual ability, should have equal access to good play opportunities

The provision of appropriate play opportunities will encourage healthier and happier children and communities

Play affirms the child and is central to his or her development

Meath Local Authorities are a key player, in partnership with others, in the provision and promotion of play opportunities for children

Play opportunities include open spaces, child-friendly areas, landscaping, play schemes, parks, libraries, schoolyards, childcare settings, fixed equipment playgrounds, indoor facilities

The child must be at the centre of all process and policies to do with play, consistent with safety, health and respect for the needs of others

The individuality of the child and the diversity of all children is deserving of respect and value. Prejudice or lack of appropriate provision for those with disabilities and those who suffer cultural or social exclusion has no place in the play environment.

The following core principles underpin this policy:

Social Inclusion – ensuring all children have the opportunity to participate in play opportunities developed as a result of this policy regardless of cost, race, ethnicity, gender, location or ability

Inter-agency Co-operation and Partnership – working with local communities and other agencies and organisations to maximise opportunities for play and usage of play facilities.

Encouraging a Child Friendly Environment – ensuring private and public developers take into consideration the needs of children and young people and the impact of their developments on play, recreation and safety.

Consultation with Children and Young People – encouraging children and young people to be involved in the development of policies and projects which impact on play provision.

Universal Access – ensuring that the varying abilities of all children, young people and carers will be taken into account at the design stage of play projects.

Community Involvement – encouraging local communities to be involved in the development of play projects.

Quality Standards – ensuring all play provision is in compliance with recommended National and European standards and relevant legislative requirements.

9 Objectives and Actions

OBJECTIVE NO. 1	To give children a voice in the design and implementation of play policies and facilities
Action No.	1
Action	Seek to consult with children in the design of playgrounds
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Meath County Childcare Committee

Action No.	2
Action	Continue to support and encourage Dáil na nÓg and Comhairle na nÓg
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Schools Primary and Secondary, Meath Youth Federation

Action No.	3
Action	Continue to use Comhairle Na nÓg for consultations and input with regard to play design and implementation
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Schools Primary and Secondary, Meath Youth Federation

OBJECTIVE NO. 2	To raise awareness of the importance of play
Action No.	1
Action	Meath Local Authorities will establish and convene a Meath Play Advisory Forum to ensure integrated strategic planning in relation to the development of play opportunities in the County. It is envisaged that the administration of the Meath Play Advisory Forum will be rotated among the member organisations.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Health Service Executive, Meath Community & Voluntary Forum, Meath County Childcare Committee, Meath Partnership, Meath Local Sports Partnership, Meath Vocational Education Committee, Meath Youth Federation, RAPID, public representatives and other relevant bodies.

Action No.	2
Action	In conjunction with partner agencies, organise play days and animation activities at traditional and non traditional play sites
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Health Service Executive, Meath Community & Voluntary Forum, Meath County Childcare Committee, Meath Partnership, Meath Local Authorities, Meath Local Sports Partnership, Meath Vocational Education Committee, Meath Youth Federation, RAPID, public representatives and other relevant bodies.

OBJECTIVE NO. 3	To ensure that children’s play needs are met through the development of a child friendly environment
Action No.	1
Action	Provide for play provision in future County Development Plans and Local Area Plans
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	2
Action	Opportunities for play will influence open space and density guidelines in such future Plans
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	3
Action	The play and recreation needs of children and young people will be taken into consideration in policy formation and planning assessments. Private developers will be encouraged to integrate play opportunities into the design of future housing developments and, as appropriate to integrate arrangements for the ongoing management of such facilities into their plans
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	4
Action	Meath Local Authorities will promote the use of creative landscaping as a means of providing new play opportunities for children. Playscape describes play spaces that are designed and built to look and feel like a natural environment. Using native plants, rolling hills, lots of trees, they are designed with the intent of bringing children and people back to nature. Playscapes offer a wide range of open-ended play options that allow children to be creative and use their

	imagination. Playscapes offer a wide range of developmental benefits to children, rehabilitation programs and all people in general, such as increasing physical activity, fine and gross motor skills & cognitive development. They are also used in horticultural therapy for rehabilitation of mental and/or physical ailment.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	5
Action	The development of Home Zones where the living environment predominates over traffic will be investigated and piloted in certain areas.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	6
Action	Funding collected under the Development Contribution Scheme developed under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act will be allocated specifically to support the development of play and recreation facilities via the Council's annual Amenity Levies Scheme. Special Contributions Scheme may also be considered as appropriate.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	7
Action	Meath Local Authorities will work with other organisations to facilitate the organisation of events throughout the County to increase children's enjoyment of parks, play areas, open spaces, libraries, community buildings and arts facilities to maximise the use of these facilities.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Meath Local Sports Partnership, Meath County Childcare Committee, Health Service Executive and Meath Partnership

Action No.	8
Action	Produce guidelines for developers of housing and commercial units outlining both regulations and best practice ideas in relation to play as well as step-by-step guide and contact points
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	9
Action	Produce guidelines for communities who may wish to get involved in providing new play facilities.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	10
Action	In recognising the role of play in creative development, Meath Local Authorities will support the development of play opportunities through the arts and libraries services.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

OBJECTIVE NO. 4	To maximise the range of public play opportunities available to children, particularly children who are marginalized or disadvantaged or who have a disability
Action No.	1
Action	Pilot project to recruit a Play Specialist in residence to be rotated amongst branches of the Meath County Council Library Service Support will be focused on areas and groups with the poorest access to good quality play opportunities
Lead Agency	Library Services - Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	HSE

Action No.	2
Action	Accommodate needs of guardians, especially the elderly, the disabled, parents of smaller children in the design of play grounds
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	HSE

OBJECTIVE NO. 5	To improve the quality and safety of playgrounds and play areas
Action No.	1
Action	Meath Local Authorities will ensure that all play facilities under its management are appropriately sited, safe and regularly maintained. Inspections will be conducted by trained personnel. Maintenance records will be kept. Damaged equipment will be repaired or removed as appropriate. Each playground supervisor will undertake appropriate training on playground maintenance and inspection.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	2
Action	Meath Local Authorities will introduce and review appropriate bye-laws within their administrative areas to govern the operation, maintenance and management of play facilities in order to ensure the safety and maximise the enjoyment of those using them.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

Action No.	3
Action	All new or redeveloped facilities will be accessible and usable for all children in accordance with Universal Design Principles and best practice.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

OBJECTIVE NO. 6	To ensure that the relevant training and qualifications are available to persons offering play and related services to children
Action No.	1
Action	Seek to ensure that relevant Meath Local Authority staff receive RoSPA Playground Inspection Training and Child Protection vetting and training in accordance with Meath County Council's Child Protection Policy. Staff of other agencies will ensure that their staff have training and vetting appropriate to their duties.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Health Service Executive, Meath County Childcare Committee, Meath Partnership, Meath Local Sports Partnership, Meath Vocational Education Committee, Meath Youth Federation, and other relevant bodies.

OBJECTIVE NO.7	To develop a partnership approach in funding and developing play opportunities
Action No.	1
Action	Meath Local Authorities will work with local communities, the County Development Board, Play Advisory Forum and other partners to develop ongoing, multi-agency Integrated Play Plans through which the individual efforts and resources of the partners will be deployed to improve the county's play environment.
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Health Service Executive, Meath County Childcare Committee, Meath Partnership, Meath Local Sports Partnership, Meath Vocational Education Committee, Meath Youth Federation, and other relevant bodies.

Action No.	2
Action	Work with RAPID, Meath Local Sports Partnership and Meath Partnership to access funding for inter-agency initiatives
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	Health Service Executive, Meath County Childcare Committee, Meath Partnership, Meath Local Authorities, Meath Local Sports

	Partnership, Meath Vocational Education Committee, Meath Youth Federation, RAPID and other relevant bodies.
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Action No.	3
Action	<p>The principle of community involvement in the design, provision and maintenance of playgrounds is an integral part of the Councils' play policy. Meath Local Authorities will provide advice on technical assistance to communities to develop own playgrounds and facilities, subject to such capacity being available as may be provided for in annual budgets.</p> <p>Only playgrounds developed with the approval of and in association with Meath Local Authorities will be considered for taking in charge, subject to appropriate conditions and criteria.</p>
Lead Agency	Meath Local Authorities
Support Agencies	

10 Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

As discussed previously an inter-agency group has managed the development of this Play Policy. The group comprised the Health Service Executive, Meath Community & Voluntary Forum, Meath County Childcare Committee, Meath Local Authorities, Meath Local Sports Partnership, Meath Partnership, Meath Vocational Education Committee, Meath Youth Federation and RAPID.

Going forward in accordance with objective 2 of this policy Meath Local Authorities will establish and convene a Meath Play Advisory Forum to ensure an integrated approach to strategic planning in relation to the development of play opportunities in the County. It is envisaged that the administration of the Meath Play Advisory Forum will be rotated among the member organisations.

Meath Play Advisory Forum is the inter-agency group that will be responsible for the implementation of the objectives and actions of this Play Policy. Meath Play Advisory Forum will work together with all of the key stakeholders to ensure that projects are developed and moved forward.

Meath Play Advisory Forum will also monitor and evaluate progress and report through the Social Inclusions Measures (SIM) group to the Meath County Development Board.

APPENDIX – Members of Play Policy Steering Group

Name	Position	Organisation
Michael Killeen	Director of Community Services	Meath Co Co
Rosemary Corr	CEDO	Meath Co Co
Kevin Loughlin	RAPID Co-ordinator	Meath Co Co
Wendy Moffet Assumpta Kelly	Senior Planner CEDO	Meath Co Co Meath Co Co
John Lynch	Senior Services Supervisor	Navan Town Council
Fiona Healy	Manager	Meath County Childcare Committee
Ger Hogarty Garret O'Brien	Manager Community Representative	Meath Youth Federation Community & Voluntary Forum (Slane Area)
Yvonne Gilsenan	Physical Activity Co-ordinator	HSE
Ciaran Mangan Mary Murphy	County Librarian Manager	Meath Co Co Meath Local Sports Partnership
Leona Matthews	Student	