

North Tyneside Council Play Site Strategy 2020 – 2030



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Play is an essential part of every child's life and is vital to their development. It is the way children explore the world around them to develop and practice skills. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.

We recognise the contribution play makes to mental and physical health, wellbeing and fitness. Our shared aim with children, young people, parents and carers is for all to enjoy a range of local, safe and exciting places to play which are valued and continue to reflect the distinct needs of each community.

We will continue to do this by providing play spaces that are diverse and dynamic with flexible features and natural spaces that encourage self-directed play. We will provide spaces that support children to encounter and manage risk for themselves, while being as safe as they need to be.

The Play Site Strategy supports the Council's 'Our North Tyneside Plan' priorities, providing a great place to live, work and visit and the 'Green Space Strategy 2015'.

Importantly, the strategy sets out priorities for ongoing play site investment and provision, with the purpose of providing communities in North Tyneside with a network of high-quality play areas.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Participation and consultation

In 2007, North Tyneside Council received £5.5m of funding to improve play equipment across the borough bringing it up to national standards.

The then Play Partnership which consisted of the voluntary and community sector, and the council, undertook extensive participation and consultation activities throughout 2005 and 2006.

Local provision was examined in detail and a variety of initiatives were undertaken with 13% (4,123) of children and young people aged 4 - 19 across the Borough.

The initiatives included mapping and a quality audit of local provision, along with the hosting of focus groups including children, carers and young people. The main findings identified that children and young people wanted:

- More places and spaces to hang out
- More affordable public transport
- More sports facilities
- Skate parks
- Safe and secure parks

Since the study, there have been significant improvements in play sites:

- 16 sites have been significantly improved
- 27 sites have been created or rebuilt
- 15 MUGAs have been constructed
- 1 Adventure Playground has been constructed

2.2 The 2007 Play Strategy ‘Things to do, places to hang out’

The previous Play Strategy ‘Things to do, places to hang out’ ensured that North Tyneside Council, and its partners through the Play Partnership, worked towards the Council’s key priority reflected in the Council Plan and the then Children and Young People’s Plan.

This included providing a whole range of opportunities for personal and social development, recreational and cultural activity, creative self-expression and independent play.

The outcomes that were achieved relevant to play sites included:

- The completion of an audit of play facilities and related activities and services across the Borough.
- Localities with limited provision being prioritised.
- Establishing the needs of children and young people, with many given improved access to good quality play opportunities.
- Children and young people participating in the design and delivery of provision to increase access to play.
- Improved quality and quantity of designated play areas in the borough.
- The implementation and completion of an investment plan.
- The creation of a variety of facilities, services and locations in response to children and young people’s demands including designated green spaces for play.

2.3 Play site improvements

Since the initial strategy was adopted by the Council, many improvements and other changes have taken place. The main changes to occur are explained below:

- Many sites have been improved raising standards and increasing accessibility and quality
- Previous investment has enabled the Council to deliver many of the 2007 Strategy action points, resulting in larger and better equipped play sites
- Capital funding opportunities have changed: S106 residential contributions have become the main contributor to enhancing play sites, as other funding has reduced

- In 2015, the Council adopted the Green Space Strategy, which underlines the importance of play in a child's development. The strategy also states the current approach in setting standards for the provision of equipped play based on quality, quantity and accessibility.

3.0 CURRENT PLAY SITE PROVISION

North Tyneside Council provides 56 outdoor play facilities and 1 staffed Adventure Playground located in Shiremoor. Included within our outdoor facilities are:

- Traditional play areas
- 7 wheeled sports areas (skate parks and a BMX pump track)
- 18 multi use games areas (MUGA's)
- 7 teen shelters.
- 3 water play sites

Shiremoor Adventure Playground is unique in its play offer and is the only staffed Adventure Playground in the North-East of England. It was built with Play Pathfinder funding in 2010 and its aim is to attract visitors from across the whole borough.

4.0 PLAY SITE CATEGORIES AND STANDARDS

4.1 Play site categories

North Tyneside has developed categories for its play facilities based on the nationally recognised guidelines of the 6 Acre Standard which was created by Fields in Trust (FIT), formerly the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA). **(See appendix 1)**

Each category gives a catchment area for individual play sites, which is illustrated in the North Tyneside Play Site Coverage map **(see appendix 2)**. The catchment area increases based on the facilities offered, recognising that people will travel further to use larger better equipped sites.

A detailed breakdown of individual play sites and their designation is provided in the North Tyneside Play Area Categories table **(See appendix 3)**. North Tyneside's coverage is now regarded as good with only a few gaps in play provision remaining.

4.2 Play site standards

The Play Site Strategy sets out standards based on five objectives; Quantity, Quality, Accessibility, Safety and Management:

4.2.1 Quantity

The Six Acre Standard (FIT) of 0.80 hectares of play space per 1000 population was adopted. The classifications of this standard were modified by North Tyneside Council to create two extra categories, the SEAP and MUGA designations.

LAP:	Local Area for Play	
LEAP:	Local Equipped Area for Play (up to 7 types of play)	
NEAP:	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (up to 10 types of play)	
SEAP:	Settlement Equipped Area for Play (11 types of play incl.)	
MUGA:	Multi Use Games Area	

The designations created in the 6 Acre Standard are commonly used throughout the country and are based on size of play area and the variety of play activities available. For example, LAP's representing small areas and NEAP's much larger areas with an increased range of equipment, catering to a wider age range of children.

Experience shows that children and their families prefer to go to larger sites where the variety and range of equipment on offer provides good play value and enhanced experiences.

For a site to be designated a LEAP or a NEAP in the 6 Acre Standard, the site must also include an area of informal kick-about space, which North Tyneside Council does not always include in these categories.

The SEAP category was added by North Tyneside Council to describe our largest best equipped sites. The MUGA category was added to designate areas for informal ball games where no traditional play items are located.

4.2.2 Quality

This objective reflects the 'play value' offered at the site based on the range of equipment provided and quality of play experience encountered. The aim is to increase the range of equipment available for play and create an attractive environment to maintain maximum interest.

Experience has shown that when these facilities are provided, they generally prove popular with children and the wider community they serve.

Maintaining existing sites to the required standard is of paramount importance to ensure the safety of children and others. Play areas should be clean, litter free and provide a safe and stimulating environment for as wide an age group as possible. The Council will also seek to ensure that any new facility constructed via the planning process meets the required standard.

Quality of experience will often be influenced by other site features for instance public toilets and appropriate seating areas. Good landscaping is fundamental to the success of any play site; appropriate tree planting which provides shade, metalled footpaths permit wheelchair access encouraging inclusivity, appropriate fencing to control access, prevent dog entry or to guard against children running onto busy roads.

Equipped children's play space should provide a sufficient variety of play experiences to offer enjoyment for all within the target age range. Encompassing as appropriate, fixed equipment and innovative facilities that encourage experimental play and social exchange, and features for passive recreation.

Quality standards should be informed by professional assessment of each site's play value.

4.2.3 Accessibility

This objective aspires to guidelines produced within the adopted 'Six Acre Standard'.

All households should be, where practicable, within an acceptable distance of an equipped play area (*see appendix 1 Table 1*).

Equipped children's play space should be created within a safe and easy walking distance, minimising the need to cross roads and other significant barriers.

Distance can be a useful tool in helping to identify deficiencies in provision but it will also be necessary to identify any barriers to children accessing those areas within the recommended distance (e.g. major roads, railways, watercourses, isolated or secluded routes, social divisions associated with location) and to make allowance for these in assessing existing facilities, particularly relevant for those with mobility issues.

4.2.4 Safety and Management of play areas

North Tyneside Council has a legal duty of care to maintain its play spaces for the health and safety of the public. It must adhere to the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and international standards BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177 which cover general safety requirements and test methods for playground equipment and impact absorbing playground surfacing. The Authority must also ensure that commercial equipment meets approved standards.

The only exception to this is Shiremoor Adventure Playground in relation to equipment which is 'self-built or bespoke' as stated in the standard 'It is not applicable to Adventure Playgrounds with the exception of those items which have been commercially sourced' (BS EN 1176)

4.2.5 The Play Site Service

The Play Team currently consists of a Play Site Officer and a maintenance team of three who are responsible for the design, management, maintenance and inspection of all North Tyneside Council's open access equipped play provision.

North Tyneside Council's play sites are inspected regularly and a maintenance and repair program is provided throughout the year. This proactive management approach prolongs the life span of equipment, as well as helping to meet the expectations of children, young people, parents and the general public. This integrated approach to provision and maintenance of equipment has been instrumental in successful defence against litigation.

An annual audit is conducted by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) and an annual maintenance program result.

4.2.6 Weekly recorded inspection of play sites

This examines the equipment's basic condition, any faults from vandalism, breakages and cleanliness of the play area. These inspections are carried out weekly as a minimum and recorded in writing.

Seasonal demand for litter collection on heavily used sites means daily visits are frequently made during high season. On these occasions faults and breakages may be noted.

These inspections are carried out by our play site team who are appropriately trained (Register of Play Inspectors International: Operational Level).

4.2.7 Annual independent inspection of play sites

This is carried out by an independent external specialist. This inspection checks for vandalism, wear and tear, long term structural problems, and compliance with approved standards. A report is provided outlining the overall safety of the play area and full documentation is received from the external inspector.

The report also informs future improvement particularly regarding equipment use and its suitability. Ensuring that the right play equipment is located at the right site enables efficient use of resources and helps reduce maintenance costs.

5.0 ACTION PLAN

In order to continue to meet the high standard of play site provision across the borough we will carry out the following:

	Action
1.	Provide the range and variety of equipment aimed at desired age groups. Provision for children will be classified under LAPS, LEAPS, NEAPS, MUGA's and SEAP's.
2.	Ensure that Settlement Equipped Areas for Play (SEAP) will include at least 10 types of play, providing a wide range of activities and offering a unique experience.
3.	Ensure that Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP) will include at least 8 types of play and where appropriate informal kick-about areas providing a wide range of activities.
4.	Ensure that Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) will include at least 5 types of play providing a variety of activities.
5.	Appropriately design spaces and consider layout, use of natural contours, attractiveness, quality of material used, functionality, inclusion of appropriate signage, efficient use of the space available and appropriate safety surfacing.
6.	Continue to engage with Ward Councillors and communities on play site design.
7.	Ensure play sites comply with legislation and quality standards and we will maintain current inspection regimes to ensure public safety and quality of provision.
8.	Consider physical barriers to access, such as busy roads and railway lines. Crossing points will be considered and accessibility for people with additional needs.
9.	Seek funding including section 106 in line with the priorities identified as part of the investment plan.
10.	Consider areas of the borough with greater need such as those areas deficient in provision or with poor access to facilities. (Appendix 2) .
11.	At Shiremoor Adventure Playground we will continue to embed the Playwork Principles in our programme so that we can maintain our 'Quality in Play Status' which is valid until 2022.
12.	Shiremoor Adventure Playground will continue to work in partnership with the Shiremoor Adventure Playground Trust to support the ongoing development of the facility.
13.	Annually review the play site investment plan.

Appendix 1

Explanation of 6 Acre Standard site categories and North Tyneside Council adaption:

The framework below is based on the categories and their characteristics of the 6 Acre Standard which was originally developed by the National Playing Fields association (now Fields in trust FIT). These categories are recognised across the country.

The NPFA play area categories were adapted to enable the Council and other service providers to look at the positive impact of small-scale improvements to existing play areas in relation to the area around them.

Table 1

The Six Acre Standard						
The National Playing Fields Association recommended minimum levels of provision for different types of facility:						
Facility	Time	Walking distance	Radial Distance	Minimum size	Nearest dwelling	Characteristics
LAP Local Area Play	1 min	100m	60m	100m ²	5m from activity zone	Small low-key games area
LEAP Local Equipped Area for Play	5 min	400m	240m	400m ²	10m from activity zone	Five types of play, small games area
NEAP Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play	15 min	1000m	600m	1000m ²	30m from activity zone	Eight types of equipment opportunities for ball games or wheeled activities

Using the NPFA play area categories (summarised in the table above) it is recommended that the LAP category should only be considered for development if there is a genuine need based on local demand and if ongoing maintenance is assured. Many LAPs are located within housing estates near to houses.

It is important that both the LEAP and NEAP play areas have quality equipment in appropriately designed and located parts of the play area for younger children to use.

The LEAP and NEAP categories have been further subdivided into three categories. This results in a positive progression in the minimum size of equipped play area and the minimum number of play activities.

Consequently, the radial straight-line distance has also been increased. The subdivision within a LEAP occurs with every additional 200m² of equipped play area and with an additional play activity. This is shown in the table below.

North Tyneside Council play area categories

Play area type	Minimum size equipped play area	Minimum number	Catchment area - radial straight-line distance for play area
LAP	Up to 400m ²	Less than 5 types of play	100m
LEAP (1)	Up to 400m ²	5 types of play	240m
LEAP (2)	Up to 600m ²	6 types of play	360m
LEAP (3)	Up to 800m ²	7 types of play	480m
NEAP (1)	Up to 1,000m ²	8 types of play	600m
NEAP (2)	Up to 1,200m ²	9 types of play	750m
NEAP (3)	Up to 1,400m ²	10 types of play	900m
SEAP	Up to 1,600m ²	11 types of play	+1,000m

The NEAP (1) in the table above is similar in characteristics to the NPFA's. However, it does not include a hard surface area as a prerequisite to a site being classified within the NEAP categories. If a hard-surfaced area is located near to a play area the study accounts for this by adding a percentage to the radial straight-line distance (see below for further information). The NEAP is also split into three sub-categories at every additional 200m² of equipped play area and with an additional play unit.

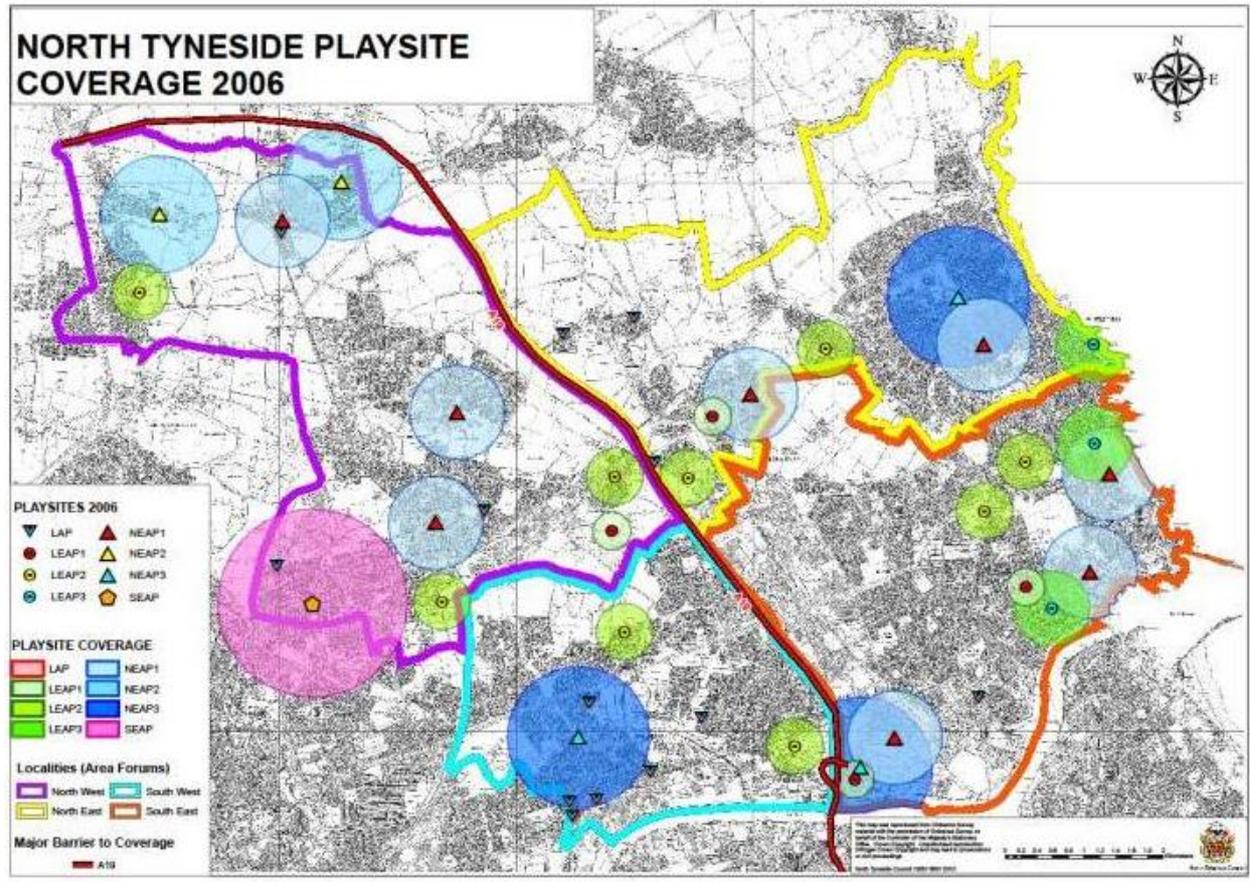
To take account of the combined LEAP/NEAP category highlighted in the NPFA's Six Acre Standard a final play area category called Settlement Equipped Play Area (SEAP) has been created. This category should include either multi-use games area, Skateboard/BMX Park and/or youth shelter.

North Tyneside's local standards consider additional facilities that could be located near to a play area that would further extend its catchment zone. These may include; a kick-wall, multi-sports rebound wall, basketball or other hard surfaced area, a multi-use games area or a skateboard/BMX park. If the site includes these facilities, the catchment zone for the play area as shown in the table above is increased by 10%.

Furthermore, the locational context of the play area is considered, such as, whether it stands alone, is located on a recreation ground or on an area with formal sport and recreation facilities. The catchment zone of the play area increases by 10% if it is located on a recreation ground and by 20% if it is located on an area with formal sport and recreation facilities. The rationale for the above is that it is assumed that people will travel greater distances to sites that have a greater variety of facilities.

As a unique facility we consider the that the catchment area for the Adventure Playground covers the whole of the borough.

North Tyneside Play Site Coverage 2006



North Tyneside Play Area Categories

Appendix 3

Ward & Number of Play Areas	Site Name	Play Area	Wheeled Sports	MUGA	Type	Age Range
Battle Hill (2)	Hadrian Park	✓		✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-14
	Tall Trees	✓		✓	NEAP 2 	1+, 8-12, Teens
Benton (2)	Benton Quarry	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-12, Teens
	Springfield Park	✓		✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
Camperdown (3)	Annitsford Welfare	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-12, Teens
	Burradon Welfare	✓	✓	✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
	Killingworth Lake	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
Chirton (1)	Norham High School	✓		✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
Collingwood (1)	Hill Top Park	✓		✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
Cullercoats (2)	Bolam Grove	✓			LEAP 2 	1+, 8-10
	Cullercoats	✓			NEAP 1 	1+, 8-12
Howdon (2)	Holy Cross	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-12, Teens
	Howdon CC	✓			LEAP 1 	1+, 8-12
Killingworth (4)	Holystone Rising Sun	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-12
	Killingworth Park	✓			NEAP 2 	1+, 8-12
	Palmersville	✓			NEAP 2 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
	Stonelea	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-12
Longbenton (3)	Merlin Place	✓			LAP 	1+, Up to 8
	Oxford Centre	✓		✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
	West Moor C Centre	✓			SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Younger teens
Monkseaton North (2)	Churchill PF	✓		✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens
	Panama		✓		SKATEPARK 	Younger children, 8-12, Teens/Youth
Monkseaton South (2)	Langley MUGA			✓	MUGA 	Younger children, 8-12, Teens/Youth
	South Wellfield (Wilton Drive)	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-10
Northumberland (1)	Station Road	✓		✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
Preston (2)	Holmlands	✓			LEAP 1 	1+, 8-10
	Pool Park	✓			LEAP 2 	1+, 8-12
Riverside (5)	Alexander Scott Park	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-12, Teens
	East Howdon	✓		✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens
	Howdon Park	✓	✓	✓	SEAP 	1+, 8-12, Teens/Youth
	Nelson Terrace	✓			NEAP 2 	1+, 8-12, Teens
	The Parks		✓		SKATEPARK 	Younger children, 8-12, Teens/Youth
St Mary's (1)	Earsdon Village	✓			NEAP 3 	1+, 8-12, Teens

Ward and & number of Play areas	Site Name	Play Area	Wheeled Sports	MUGA	Type	Age Range
Tynemouth (4)	Links Road	✓			NEAP 3 ▲	1+ 8-12 Teens
	Northumberland Park	✓	✓		SEAP ▲	1+ 8-12 Teens/youth
	Pearson Park	✓			LEAP 3 ●	1+ 8-10
	Tynemouth Park	✓			NEAP 3 ▲	1+ 8-12 Younger teens
Valley (6)	Castle Park	✓			NEAP 3 ▲	1+ 8-12 Teens
	Moorside	✓		✓	LEAP 3 ●	1+ 8-12 Teens/youth
	Murrayfield	✓			LAP ▼	1+ Up to 8
	Shire Trim Track	✓			LEAP 1 ●	6 -10
	West Allotment	✓		✓	SEAP ▲	1+ 8-12 Teens/youth
	Shiremoor Adventure Play	✓		✓	SEAP ▲	1+ 8-teens/youth
Wallsend (7)	The Avenue	✓			LAP ▼	1+ 8 -10
	Crawley Road	✓			LAP ▼	1+ Up to 6
	Kings Road	✓			LEAP 1 ●	1+ Up to 8
	North Terrace			✓	MUGA ■	Younger children 8-12, Teens/youth
	Oak Grove	✓			LEAP 1 ●	1+ , up to 6
	Richardson Dees Park	✓	✓	✓	SEAP ▲	1+ , 8-12 Teens/youth
	Winifred Gardens	✓			LEAP 1 ●	1+ , up to 6
Weetslade (3)	John Willie Sams Centre (PFI)	✓	✓	✓	SEAP ▲	1+ , 8-12 Teens/youth
	Lockey Park	✓		✓	SEAP ▲	1+ , 8-12 Teens/youth
	Seatonburn	✓			NEAP 3 ▲	1+ , 8-12, Teens
Whitley Bay (3)	Marmion Terrace	✓			NEAP 2 ▲	1+ , 8-12 Teens
	Rockcliffe Park	✓			NEAP 2 ▲	1+ , 8-10
	Whitley Park	✓		✓	SEAP ▲	1+ , 8-12 Teens/youth