



ASHLEY GODFREY ASSOCIATES

DRAFT PLAY INDICATORS EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared For



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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Context

The Children's Play Council has been funded by the Big Lottery to develop a small number of strategic indicators for assessing local authority performance in ensuring the availability of quality facilities and spaces for all children and young people's play and informal recreation across their local area.

1.2 Purpose of the Play Indicators

1.2.1 Aims of the Play Indicators Project

The primary aim of the Play Indicators Project is to stimulate improved and increased provision for children's and young people's play and informal recreation around their local neighbourhoods by: -

- Developing a balanced set of indicators for the 'play offer'¹ to children, young people and their communities across each local authority area. The indicators are intended to capture the range, extent and quality of play provision and play opportunities across an area, and be practicable as both management tools and upward drivers of performance for the local authority and its partners in the delivery of the 'play offer'.
- Establishing the acceptability of individual indicators for use as part of the local authority performance management framework.
- Developing a set of indicators that demonstrate the potential contribution of the local 'play offer' to the outcomes for all children and young people in the *Every Child Matters – Change for Children* programme.

The performance indicators should measure the performance of local authorities in providing appropriate facilities and spaces for play and informal recreation. The indicators focus on:

1 See Diagram 1

- children and young people's access to and use of spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation
- children and young people's experience of spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation
- the quality of local spaces and facilities available for play and informal recreation.

1.2.2 The purpose of the indicators

The purpose of the indicators is to support management and improve performance. It is intended that the indicators should initially have the potential for use within the culture block of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and in the Joint Area Reviews of children's services which form part of the Ofsted *Every Child Matters (ECM)* Inspection Framework.

The role of the strategic indicators is to assess local authority performance in ensuring availability of, and access to a variety of good quality facilities and spaces for play and informal recreation.

Children's Play Council believes that the primary aim of local authority investment in and support for local spaces and facilities for children and young people's play and informal recreation should be to increase the numbers and frequency of children and young people – from all social groups - playing freely in their local neighbourhood or in staffed play facilities. Evidence shows that this is good for children and young people, good for families and good for supporting inclusive communities.

The pilot indicators seek to measure the extent to which, wherever they live or spend the majority of their free time, children and young people have access to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation which:

- pass the '**3 frees**'² test ie **free** of charge, where they are **free** to come and go and **free** to choose what they do whilst there;

2 Developed by Perry Else, Sheffield Hallam University 2005

- are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific needs and wishes;
- allow for the differing needs people of different ages and with different play interests and needs.

1.2.3 A new performance framework

The development of performance indicators for play will need to be mindful of the Government's proposals for performance measurement in the future. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published in October 2006 its local government white paper, 'Strong and prosperous communities'. The White Paper sets out a radical simplification of the performance framework. There will be around 35 priorities for each area agreed with Government, tailored to local needs through the Local Area Agreement. Instead of the hundreds of indicators currently required by central government there will be a single set of about 200 outcome-based indicators covering important national priorities. Comprehensive Performance Assessment, is to be replaced by a new assessment regime, Comprehensive Area Assessment, which will be more proportionate and risk-based. This single set of national indicators, which will draw from existing indicators where appropriate, will replace other sets of performance indicators. The national indicators will be outcome measures, with output or process measures used only where absolutely essential and where they are robust proxies or lead indicators. The White Paper sets out the need for indicators to be clearly defined, including scale (for example neighbourhood, district, county) and frequency of reporting. They will include convergence measures (measuring the gap between the most disadvantaged people and places and the average) where appropriate. Consideration is to be given to the need to disaggregate data provided against individual indicators (for example by ethnicity, gender, disability) to establish performance relative to specific groups. The national indicator set will include a small number of 'citizen satisfaction and perspective' measures which will be developed in partnership with local government and other organizations.

1.2.4 Local authority responsibilities

Local authorities have a duty, under the Children Act 2004, to work across their service areas and with other organisations to promote the well-being of all children and young people. This includes promoting play and recreational opportunities.

Although much local provision for children and young people's free-time activity is made by the community and voluntary sector, local authorities can only be sure local children are well provided for if they adopt a strategic approach to the development, delivery and support of appropriate and quality spaces and facilities.

Local authority success in promoting opportunities for children and young people's play and informal recreation should therefore include indicators for the full range of provision it supports, including that from the community, voluntary and social enterprise sectors, not merely that provided directly by the local authority.

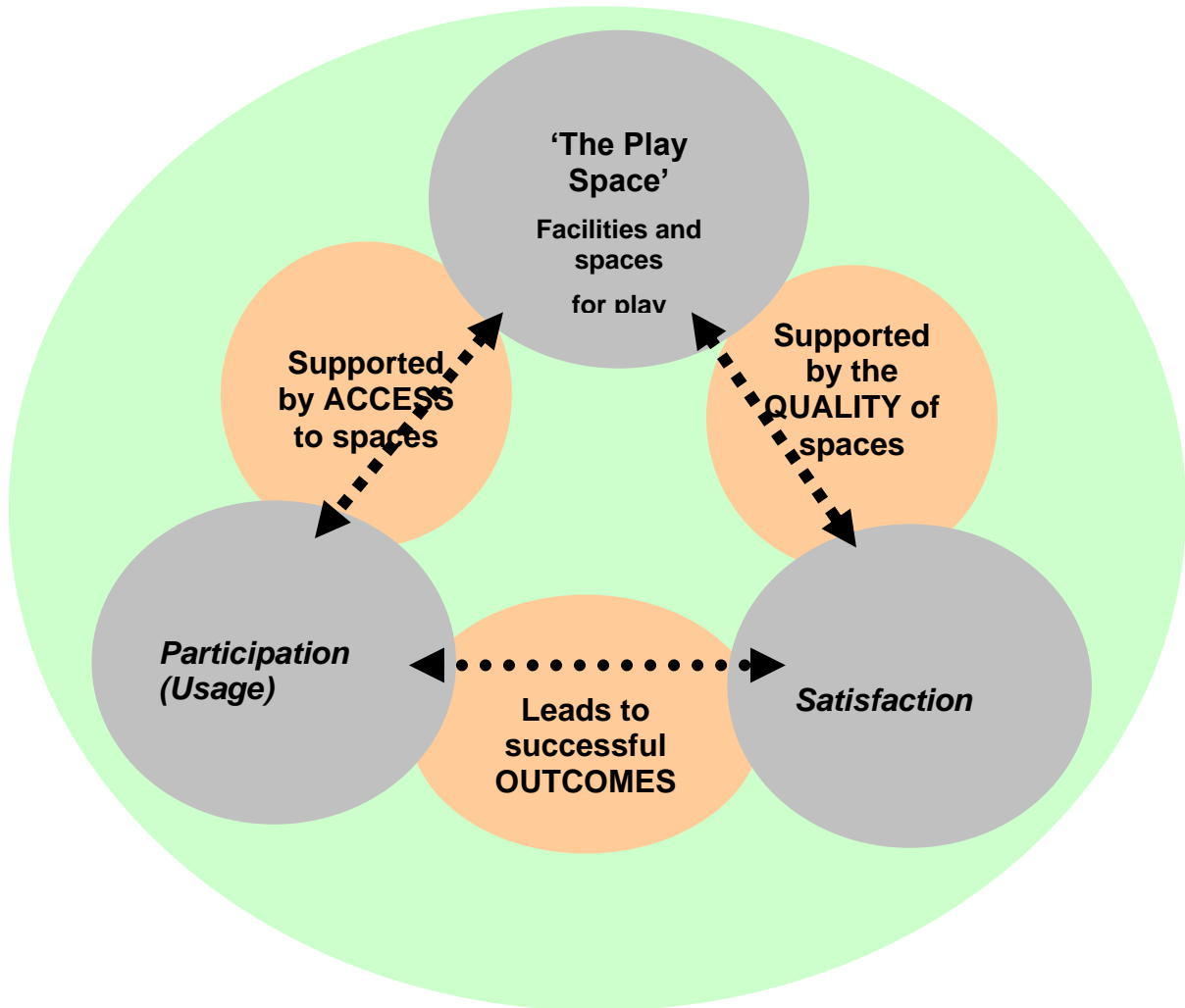
1.3 The Development of the Pilot Indicators

1.3.2 The Play Offer

The proposed performance indicators have been developed around the model of the **Play Offer** described in **Diagram 1** below. This starts with the concept of all children and young people having **access** to a variety of facilities and spaces for play and informal recreation in their neighbourhood. There is evidence to suggest that where those opportunities exist then all children are more likely to play out i.e. **participate**. They are most likely to do this if they are **satisfied** with the experience and will benefit most if the facilities and spaces are of high **quality**.

The model emphasises the importance of considering how the variety of facilities and spaces is accessible to specific social groups, and of including equity measures within the performance indicators.

Diagram 1: The Play 'Offer'



1.4 Description of the Pilot Indicators

1.4.1 Pilot Indicator 1: Participation in play and informal recreation

The primary objective of improving local facilities and spaces for play and informal recreation is to increase the amount of time children and young people spend playing. The **participation indicator** (shown in **Table 1**) is designed to measure this. Participation is also a key indicator across other local authority cultural and recreational services.

Table 1: Participation indicator

Pilot Indicator 1	Participation.	Method of Generation
Description	The percentage of children and young people aged birth to 16 from all social and ethnic groups, including those who are disabled, who play out for at least four hours each week.	School and/or Household Survey

1.4.2 Pilot Indicator 2: Children and young people's levels of satisfaction with spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

Children and young people will get most enjoyment and benefit from local spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation if they are happy about the quality, safety and location of those places. One measure of satisfaction is 'quality of experience' this is based on, 'children having opportunities for a playful experience'. The nature of the experience is the measure of satisfaction. If children are satisfied with the experience they are more likely to participate. The **satisfaction indicator** will help local authorities identify the best ways of improving provision for children and young people.

Table 2: Pilot Indicator 2

Pilot indicator 2: Satisfaction	Method of generation
The percentage of children and young people who think that the range and quality of play facilities and spaces they are able to access in their local neighbourhood is good/very good	School and household survey

1.4.3 Pilot Indicator 3: The quality of spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

The best facilities and spaces for play and informal recreation offer children and young people a variety of environments and experiences, are located in areas with informal oversight, are well managed and maintained, feel safe and are welcoming and accessible to all those who might want to use them. Where staff and volunteers are employed to support and oversee children’s play there are additional quality criteria. Table 3 defines this indicator, which results from professional assessment of the quality of relevant spaces.

Table 3: Pilot Indicator 3

Pilot indicator 3: Quality of facilities and spaces	Method of generation
The proportion of facilities and spaces meeting the quality criteria for “excellent” and “good” ratings	Assess against standards based on quality criteria

1.4.4 Pilot Indicator 4: Access to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

If children and young people are to use the facilities and spaces available they must be able to travel to them independently as they get older. Parents of young children should also be able to walk, with their children, to local play areas and should be able to see their children playing outside from their own homes. This **access indicator**, designed to assess the provision of this type of opportunity, is described in the following table.

Table 4: Pilot Indicator 4: Access to a variety of facilities and spaces for play and informal recreation

Pilot indicator 4: Access to a variety of facilities and spaces	Method of generation
The percentage of children and young people aged from birth to 16 that have access to at least three different types (type A, type B and type C) of space or facility, at least one of which is a dedicated place for play and informal recreation, which are all within easy walking or cycling distance as defined in Table 5	Audit of spaces and places within the local authority area that provide opportunities for free play and informal recreation GIS mapping

Table 5: Distance thresholds for catchment areas.

Type of Space	Walking Distance (m)	Straight Line Distance (m)
Type A: `Door-step` spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation	100	60
Type B: `Neighbourhood` spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation	400	240
Type C: `Local` spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation	1000	600

1.5 The Pilot Local Authorities

1.5.1 Participating authorities

Six authorities took part in the indicator pilot; these were

Chelmsford District Council, a largely rural area in west Essex based on the county town of Chelmsford but also covering a number of smaller villages. Chelmsford is the only district to have participated and has provided valuable pointers on the capacity of districts to deliver these indicators;

Kirklees Council, a metropolitan council in West Yorkshire centred on the large town of Huddersfield and also covering a range of smaller towns and villages. Kirklees has a large range of play provision;

Manchester City Council, an entirely urban metropolitan council covering a large and diverse community which includes a major city centre and inner city undergoing significant regeneration, and suburban areas;

Bolton Metropolitan Council, covering the large urban area of Bolton and its immediate surroundings, northwest of Manchester;

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, a London borough in the west of the central metropolis that includes some extremely high value properties as well as areas of deprivation;

Bristol City Council, a large unitary authority in the west of England that covers a primarily urban area with a diverse population base.

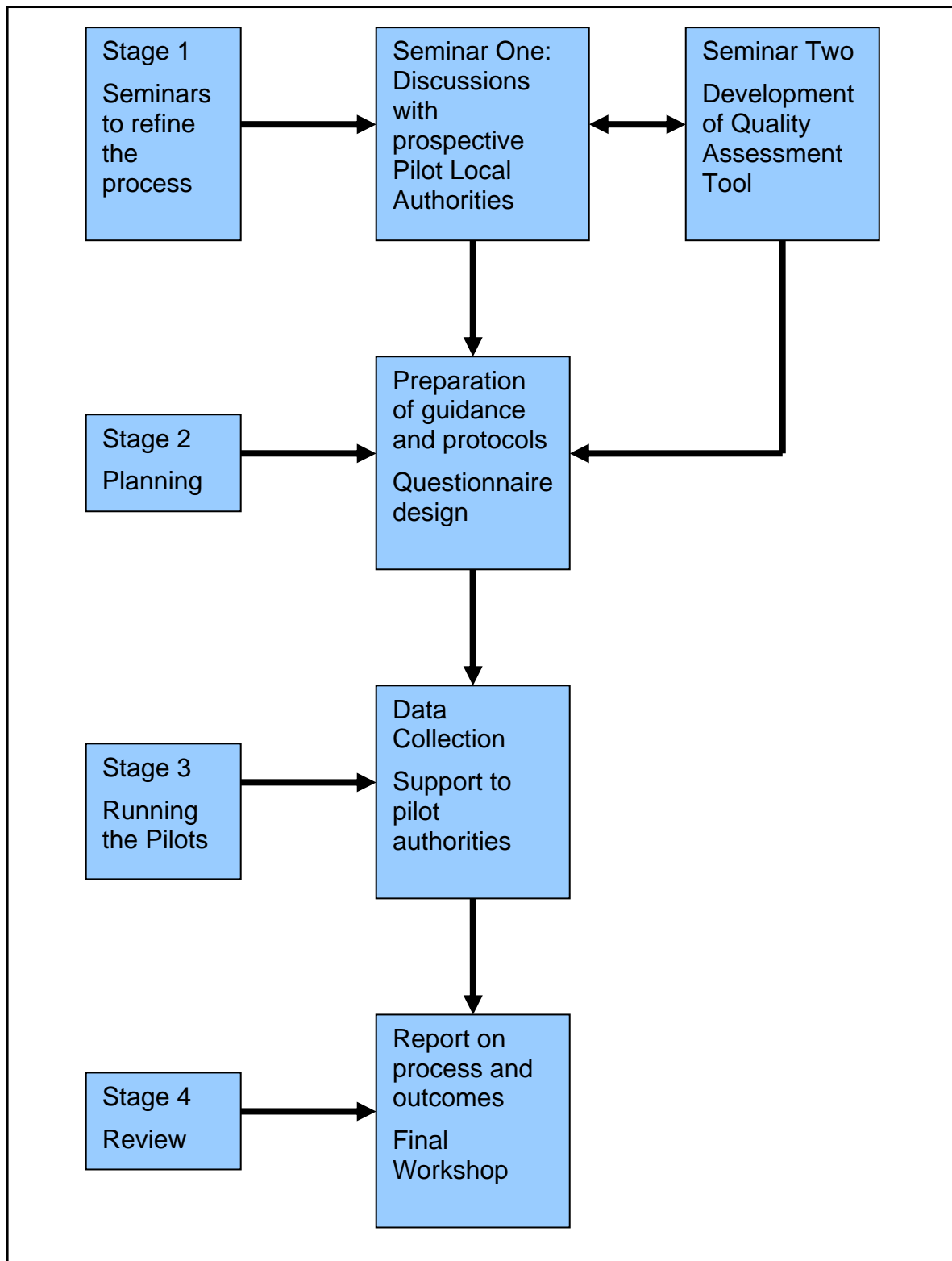
We are very grateful to the many staff involved at each of these authorities for their constructive and enthusiastic approach to the pilot indicators and to the challenges the exercise has thrown up.

1.6 The Pilot Process

1.6.1 Piloting the Play Indicators

A four stage process was envisaged and this is shown in **Diagram 2** below.

Diagram 2: Piloting the Play Indicators



1.6.2 Stage One: Seminars

A seminar with the prospective Pilot Local Authorities took place on Thursday 20 April 2006. This established a clear framework for the project including clarification of the expected outcomes for the study.

A further seminar took place with the Play Indicators Advisory Group on Friday 21 April 2006 specifically to discuss the development of an assessment tool for the Quality Indicator.

1.6.3 Stage Two: Planning and Preparation

A guidance manual providing clear definitions of the indicators was prepared to assist the pilot authorities with data sources and methods for collecting the data.

This sought to:

- ensure that the definitions are precise but practicable;
- explain what should be measured;
- explain how the data would be checked and audited;
- explain how the data should be collected;
- explain the technical properties of each indicator, e.g. with respect to sampling scheme, response rate in surveys, and precision;
- how the data will be analysed;

1.6.4 Stage Three: Running the Pilots

Inception meetings were held with representatives from the Pilot Local Authorities in August and September 2006 in order to ensure that those involved in piloting the indicators were fully prepared and to answer any technical questions relating to data collection.

Data collection started in October 2006 and continued through to April 2007. Two Network Days attended by all the pilot authorities and hosted by Sheffield Hallam University were held on November 30th 2006 and 5th March 2007. In the intervening period, the consultancy team provided ongoing support to the managers and staff involved.

1.6.5 Stage Four: Review

Stage Four includes the production of this evaluation report of the pilot. A final workshop with the participating authorities will be held before the production of the final report.

The guidance document will be revised to take account of the lessons learnt during the pilot process.

1.7 The Consultancy Team

1.7.1 Team Members

The Project Leader for the pilot was Ashley Godfrey who was responsible for the development of the pilot indicators. RBA Research, a specialist public sector research agency, initially provided specialist research support until the company went into Administration in October 2006. Continuity was provided by one of their Directors, Phil Back, who joined Ashley Godfrey Associates in the same month.

Professor Peter Taylor of Sheffield Hallam University who is the technical consultant to Sport England's National Benchmarking Service, was able to bring his experience of piloting performance indicators for the development of sport with four local authorities, to this pilot.

Finally, Pete Sinclair of Mapalytics provided specialist advice on the use of Geographic Information Systems in the mapping requirement for the Access Indicator.

Haki Kapasi was commissioned separately to develop the Quality Tool for assessing the quality of play provision. Whilst not directly engaged as a full member of the consultancy team, Haki worked closely with all the team members and attended several of the events that were organized. Haki also visited all the pilot authorities and worked with them on the development and application of the tool. The team is very grateful to Haki for her co-operation and support throughout the pilot process.

1.7.2 Consultancy support

The consultants provided support to the pilot authorities throughout the process. This took the form of:

Written Guidance

A Guidance Manual was prepared explaining the pilot process and providing details on how to conduct the surveys, audits and the GIS mapping. This underwent a number of revisions during the course of the pilot process in response to observations from the pilot authorities and the emerging requirement to clarify definitions. The difficulties encountered in the development of the Quality Tool also meant that the guidance required updating in response to the changes to the Tool. This was finalised in November 2006, although further revisions of the Quality Tool have taken place since.

Bulletin Board

A Bulletin Board was created to enable the local authority staff participating in the pilot to have online discussions with one another and exchange ideas and information. It was also used by the consultants to inform all the pilots about issues that had arisen and how these could be addressed.

Ongoing Support

Ongoing support was provided in a number of ways. Any questions regarding the methods for collecting data were normally dealt with by telephone and followed up with e-mail responses where this was required. In one case there was a request to assist with the provision of training for staff undertaking assessments. On two other occasions, concerns about the difficulties encountered by the pilots in recruiting schools prompted a personal visit by a member of the consultancy team.

Network Days

Two Network Days were organised and representatives of the pilot authorities invited to attend. The days were very well attended and enabled the representatives to meet and network. The days also enabled those directly involved in the process to develop their understanding of the methods employed and to share their concerns with the Children's Play Council and with the consultants.

1.8 Financial Support

The Children's Play Council provided Grant aid to the pilot authorities to assist with the costs of undertaking the pilot.

2.0 Participation Indicator

2.1 Definition

The participation indicator sought to establish the proportion of children who play outside for at least 4 hours per week. Its precise wording is

The percentage of children and young people aged birth to 16 from all social and ethnic groups, including those who are disabled, who play out for at least four hours each week.

The measurement was to be undertaken using a survey of parents (the household survey), and/or a survey of children themselves, referred to as the schools survey. The methodology varied between the two approaches and both are discussed below. The pilot sought to establish which of the approaches used generated the most reliable and cost-effective results.

2.2 Introduction

It was recognised that the participation indicator and the satisfaction indicator could best be addressed using surveys. We took the view that both parents and children are stakeholders in the answers to these questions and both have a legitimate view, although we also considered the possibility that children would know better than their parents where, and for how long, they had been playing in particular places. An original intention to put the participation indicator to children, and the satisfaction indicator to parents, was quickly overturned when we realised that it was actually quite feasible – and possibly advantageous in understanding the nature of response - to put both questions to both groups.

The full questions provided to participating authorities in the guidance are provided as an appendix to this report, but in essence we sought to ask

- Where children had played, and for how long, in the four weeks preceding the completion of the questionnaire;

- Respondents' opinions on the range of play facilities in their neighbourhood, using a five point scale from excellent to poor;
- Respondents' opinions on the quality of play facilities in their neighbourhood, using a five point scale ranging from excellent to poor.

2.2.1 Issues concerning definitions used in the surveys

Our basic frameworks for decision making around issues of definition included *Planning for Play*, the guidance published by Play England to support the development of play strategies in local authorities. We were also guided by the work of the Audit Commission and relevant government departments in the development and refinement of existing performance indicators, with which we wanted to achieve synergies where possible.³

One key definition that was encountered early on was the issue of what actually constitutes 'play'. Does it, for instance, include taking part in out of school organised activities (such as out of school clubs), taking part in organised sport (five a side football) or informal sport (swimming), and does it include activities such as cubs or brownies? The basic yardstick here was the "three frees" described in the guidance and on page 3, but we realised that we could not provide a detailed definition as part of a survey, instructing respondents to include this but exclude that. We therefore left it to respondents themselves to decide what activities were included in play and we strongly suspect that this would normally be interpreted as unstructured and unsupervised activity, very much along the lines of the *Planning for Play* understanding.

A draft questionnaire led to a prolonged discussion over definitions, particularly as regards 'playing outside'; our initial view was that the questions should be as inclusive as possible, allowing respondents to answer the question fully even if we then eliminated some of their answers. This led us towards a list of possible play

³ Performance indicators such as BV3, BV4, BV119 and others are collected using a household survey at recurring intervals. Very detailed guidance, refined over several years, is issued to authorities collecting data for these indicators.

opportunities, rather than a simplex question, to ensure that everything we considered 'playing outside' would be seen in the same way by respondents.

At least one pilot queried the absence from the list of 'playing in the garden'. We took the firm view that this was not one of the 'three frees' in that a private garden is not a place where children can necessarily come and go as they please. However it was especially noted that in Kensington and Chelsea (and perhaps elsewhere as well) there are a large number of private, locked gardens shared between groups of residents, which are used to a greater or lesser extent for play. This challenged our assumption of a 'traditional' back garden private to a single household; but we felt that we had to omit this type of provision from the survey indicators.

There was also a protracted discussion over whether or not 'playing on the beach' should be included, especially where there was no beach in the authority area. Our argument for including it was

- The beach is a valid answer in terms of the 'three frees' but might not be recognised as such without a specific prompt, especially in a list of largely green spaces;
- It would need to be present for coastal authorities and should therefore be present for all authorities, to ensure comparability;
- We are aware of at least two non-coastal authorities that have created artificial beaches to widen the play experience for local children.

We also discussed whether or not to provide help for respondents by explaining what we meant by certain terms, particularly 'range' and 'quality'. This is always a difficult issue; definitions may be thought to help to assure consistency, but in practice people don't always read definitions carefully, and excessively long or complex question wordings can damage response. In the end we compromised with fairly simple explanations of what we meant, although we were not convinced by the result, as will be seen later.

2.2.2 Guidance on the surveys (participation indicator and satisfaction indicator)

Guidance was issued to all the participating authorities, specifying how the two surveys should be undertaken. At the request of the authorities, the guidance was highly specific and detailed as to methodology, in an effort to ensure that variations of approach did not damage the comparability of the data. However, some variations were permitted subject to certain conditions and a controlled environment, allowing us to make comparisons between different approaches as well as assessing the overall feasibility of collecting the data.

Two core methodologies were required from pilot authorities: a household survey and a survey of children and young people to be carried out through schools.

Both methodologies were quantitative in nature. Although there was a wish to explore softer aspects of play in a qualitative way, we took the view that a quantitative approach is essential to the securing of comparable data suitable for reporting as performance indicators.

Our guidance also included specific questionnaire wordings and an introductory letter to be sent with the survey forms. We also specified details such as the need to provide freepost response envelopes and to offer large print, minority languages and audio versions of the form on request – as is done with the Dept of Communities and Local Government survey.

2.2.3 Variations

Several comments emerged from the pilot authorities as regards wording, layout and order of the questions. We generally resisted significant changes to wording, especially where the proposed change would have affected the measurement of the indicator (such as a request to remove specific times from the 'hours played' question, which would have removed the possibility of measuring the numbers of children playing for more than 4 hours). We were much more accommodating in regards to layout and to the order of questions, and also allowed authorities to add questions of their own in appropriate places. However, we reserved the right to veto

changes and requested sight of questionnaires for approval before these were issued.

Several authorities wanted to 'go beyond' the minimum sample requirements specified in the guidance, for instance widening the schools survey to a wider range of children. We allowed this provided that it was still possible to isolate, without interpolation, the specific groups called for in the guidance. This was the only safe basis for comparability between authorities.

Some changes in wording on the schools survey were permitted following representations about the level of language being employed.

2.2.4 In-house or external?

In our early discussions with authorities, we made it clear that we would not require them either to commission the surveys externally, or to conduct them in-house; this was a decision to be made locally, in the light of local capacity to handle the workload and available resource. In the event, different approaches were adopted. Most schools surveys were handled in-house, but some household surveys were commissioned externally with specialist research agencies.

Those authorities that did the work internally generally produced satisfactory results overall, but we were disappointed by the quality and penetration of analysis of some of the material received back from external analysts. It is difficult to comment on this without seeing the brief they were given but it may be helpful to include in the guidance some support for those authorities wanting to commission the work externally, as to what they should reasonably expect their research provider to provide.

2.2.5 The RBA factor

In any pilot process, it is perhaps inevitable that something unexpected will happen that threatens the viability of the whole process and prompts emergency rescue action. In this pilot, the most serious challenge to planning and implementation was the untimely collapse and rapid disappearance of the research contractor RBA Research, which employed one of the consultants managing the project, and which had secured the contracts to run the household and schools surveys for some of the

pilots, after a competitive tendering process. RBA had also designed the original questionnaires and developed a good working relationship with some of the pilots. Their absence from the scene left a gaping and highly dangerous hole in the project.

The collapse took place before any of the surveys had begun, thus precipitating a procurement problem rather than one of sustaining a survey already under way. Nevertheless, the need to re-procure caused significant delays for a number of authorities and delayed the distribution of the household survey until quite late in the pilot timetable; this also meant that data was collected at different times of the autumn term, losing some comparability between pilots. The collapse also meant that a new provider to host the online surveys had to be found very quickly, since Bolton were due to go live imminently.

The problems were severe, but were mitigated by prompt action on the part of the consultants and by understanding on the part of the pilot authorities and the client. Sheffield Hallam University agreed to provide hosting services for those authorities that needed them, and the RBA consultant has continued to work on the project in a personal capacity, maintaining continuity throughout the survey process.

2.3 Sampling and distribution – the household survey

We briefly considered possible alternatives to self-completion questionnaires (telephone, face to face interview) but eliminated these as not cost-effective. We were also aware that DCLG has removed the face-to-face completion option from its guidance on performance indicator surveys and wanted to be consistent with this. All three methods are vulnerable to the difficulty of pre-identifying households with resident children.

A key element in a quantitative study is the survey sample; if this is devised incorrectly, it will damage a survey irrevocably. We therefore took great care in determining and specifying how the survey sample should be drawn for the household survey. Essentially there were two places from which a sample could be drawn:

The electoral register. This has the advantage of naming individuals as well as addresses (and it is known that a personally addressed questionnaire is more likely

to elicit a response). However, registration for elections is voluntary, and certain population groups are less likely to register; in addition, only the 'edited' register would be available for survey purposes, and this excludes those who have chosen to suppress their details. We know that suppression is more likely in certain population groups (high profile occupations such as teachers, social workers etc, and victims of domestic violence, for example) and this builds in a considerable bias. In some districts, only 50% of the names on the register appear in the edited register.

The postal address file (PAF). This is a database which can be purchased from specialist suppliers listing all residential properties with a postal address in the specified area (for instance, within a local authority's boundaries). The advantage here is that it includes all residential addresses, but as it does not identify residents by name, all mail has to be addressed to 'The Occupier'. This affects response, as it makes questionnaires appear to be junk mail. A further complication arises for homes that have no separate postal address (primarily residential homes and houses in multiple occupancy) where mail addressed to 'The Occupier' is likely to be ignored.

After careful consideration, we took the view that the PAF was the preferred sample base. We felt the advantages of comprehensiveness outweighed the disadvantages of the lack of a named respondent. We were also mindful that DCLG has taken a similar view in relation to its guidance for other performance indicators requiring surveys, and felt it was important to be consistent (not least because of the possibility, at the start of this work, of integrating the surveys in the final roll-out).

As it turned out, we were also asked to consider the possibility of using the **Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG)**, which is being developed in most authorities now but which we understand is variable in its state of readiness. The gazetteer is similar to the PAF in listing addresses without identifying occupiers. One potential difficulty with the LLPG is that all properties are listed, regardless of their postal status; we were comfortable with it as an alternative, provided that we could gain assurances that only residential properties would be selected. Two pilots used the LLPG in preference to purchasing the PAF, and it is clearly a highly cost-effective alternative which should be considered for use in this kind of work.

The **Council Tax register** may, by law, only be used for collecting Council Tax and is therefore not a basis for sampling. Government has in the early days of Best Value hinted at changing this status, but has yet to do so.

Sample size was another factor for consideration. Standard statistical principles told us that we would need approximately 1,100 responses to be confident about the results within normal statistical parameters.⁴ However, we also recognised that we were primarily interested in households with children (the opinions of non-parents on range and quality would be valid, but they could offer us little on participation) and that these represent a minority of households. A normal sample size of 2,500, as is typically used to generate 1100 responses in many authorities, would not generate nearly enough responses from families in our survey. Moreover, several pilots reported that recent postal survey response rates for their areas had been falling to quite disappointing levels. We therefore decided that we would ask pilots to send out a sample of 5,000 forms. Of these, around 1,500 would be going to homes with children (such households are 29% of the total households in England and Wales), and these would not only be more likely to respond due to the relevance of the questions, but also many would be able to answer in respect of more than one child, giving us an enhanced number of children at least for the participation indicator.

One authority (Kirklees) objected strongly to the guidance on the basis of potential wastage of resource (in sending questionnaire to households which had no children) and the consequential damage to the council's reputation and relationship with its community. We agreed to modify the approach to allow a distribution to take place through schools, where questionnaires were posted to the parents of selected children. The questionnaire was in this instance limited to just one child, and the respondent was asked to complete it in respect of the child who had had the most recent birthday (not necessarily the child bringing the questionnaire home, of course). It is interesting to compare the outcome of this approach with the more traditional method.

⁴ An error margin of +/- 3% at the 95% confidence interval, the standard used by DCLG in its survey guidance and generally accepted as an industry norm for confidence.

One final factor we wanted to explore was timetabling. Outdoor play is strongly subject to climatic conditions, to 'disposable time' and to the onset of darkness. To avoid these complications affecting the results in different authorities, we wanted to ensure that all the surveys were carried out to a tight, defined timetable that would mean that respondents were always answering questions in terms of a period that was not in the school holidays (when outdoor play would be likely to be greatly increased) and before the clocks go back in the autumn, heralding the onset of very short evenings and poorer outdoor climates. We also had to recognise, though, that half terms in particular vary across the country, so specifying a timetable in terms of actual dates could mean that some authorities were measuring across holidays whilst others were not.

Our preferred timing for the survey was in the autumn term, before half term. These other alternatives were discarded:

- Leaving the survey until after half term in the autumn term would mean that half term would be included in some responses and would run into shorter evenings and poorer weather.
- Short evenings and poorer weather would also argue against using the first half of the spring term. The second half of the spring term would be a possibility but begins in March, before the clocks go forward, and is variable in length due to the inconsistent timing of Easter. It is also too late for this pilot's timetable.
- The first half of the summer term would offer a "next best" option, but would also be constrained by the timing of Easter; the second half of the summer term is exam time and children may have more disposable time in the form of study periods. Any time in the summer term would be too late for this pilot's timetable.

We also considered and encouraged the widening of the household survey to include other questions apart from those required by the indicator. We especially saw value in this as a way of making the survey relevant to all who received it, not just those with children in the household. An early opportunity was the coincidence of the pilot with the DCLG best value satisfaction survey, but although we explored synergy here we were not confident that the best value sample would generate

enough children, and also thought that the length of our requirement was such that it might damage response to a survey that contributes substantially to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. This risk was too great and we therefore abandoned it as a plan. We also advised authorities to ensure that their selected sample did not overlap with that chosen for BVPI purposes, as this too might have damaged response to both surveys.

2.4 Sampling and distribution – the schools indicator

We always knew that the schools survey would be much more difficult to control. The guidance specified that seven schools should be selected, and one class selected from each school as a minimum sample, again in the expectation that this would yield sufficient data to allow a measure of confidence to be applied to it. The seven schools would include primary and secondary, classes would cover years 5 and 6 in primary, 7-10 in secondary (we took the view that younger children would find the survey too daunting), and although independent schools could be included they should not be allowed to dominate the sample. We were happy to allow the survey to be used in special schools but recognised that it might be completely unsuitable for many potential respondents in such settings.

The guidance specified that the schools survey could be run as either a paper-based survey or an online survey; participating authorities used both methods. In practice, the online option seems to have been more viable for secondary schools where both the provision and quality of IT kit is greater; in primary schools, there are often still too few computers and too much sharing of resource to make this a practicable option. There were similar issues over software, which is not uniform between schools.

Two other issues that arose in connection with the schools survey were security and multiple responses. On security, it was necessary to persuade schools IT personnel to allow access to an external site to enable access to the survey form (since this was hosted remotely rather than uploaded onto the school's own server). This firewall management was an extra element of timetabling that we had not anticipated, but which would need to be allowed for in final guidance.

As to multiple responses, the normal approach in an online survey is to 'sow a cookie' to any PC that has responded to the survey, preventing the same person from responding again and thus having a disproportionate influence on the results. In schools, all IT kit is shared between a multiplicity of users and cookies to block multiple responses could not be used. It is therefore possible (though we think unlikely) that some children could have responded more than once. This was a risk worth taking to enable online participation.

There were also two unquantifiable potential sources of bias in the schools survey results. One was the basis on which schools were selected, which was left to pilot authorities to decide within quite broad guidance encouraging a geographical and socio-economic spread, and the other was a suspicion in some quarters that teachers might influence the response from schools. The first of these could be overcome only if all schools were equally disposed to participate (which they were not, and would not be in real life either) but the second could be groundless, and if present could easily be addressed in the guidance.

Pilots were encouraged to use incentives to bring schools on board. These could include cash payments, but could also have included the provision of a lesson plan suitable for citizenship, IT or PHSE, in that the survey represented an opportunity to participate (and to discuss the merits of participation) in a democratic process, using an online approach, and concerning dimensions of health and exercise. This was convincing in some quarters but not universally; at least one school found it very valuable to have this idea available at the end of term when lesson plans were harder to develop. A further incentive to participate was the possible effect that being seen to take part might have on the school's positioning in relation to Joint Area Reviews, which were taking place at the same time.

We recognise that this approach excluded the youngest children, and also those excluded from school. We felt there was no reliable way of surveying children under year 5 age on a consistent basis suitable for performance reporting, and that excluded children were unlikely to respond to any mechanism of a quantitative nature.

We recognised throughout that this was by no means a perfect mechanism. However much we urged the authorities to choose their schools carefully, to ensure a mix of catchment areas, and to encourage as near 100% completion as possible from the selected classes, we could never guarantee that this would have happened at all, let alone in a consistent way across all authorities. We also knew that several authorities wished to go beyond the minimum requirement, while others would struggle to meet it, threatening the absolute comparability of the data. However, we felt that it was important that we sought the views of those directly affected by provision or lack of it, as well as their parents. We also knew that a school survey was the only way to secure this without the need to obtain parental consent on an individual basis from each respondent⁵, a tortuous and impracticable process that would be vulnerable to bias in its own right.

In practice, even this (apparently modest) requirement proved quite challenging for some authorities. One pilot (Kensington) had only three secondary schools in the borough, and therefore required to secure 100% compliance if they were to adhere to the guidance; we also quickly recognised that several district authorities would also struggle on the grounds of a limited number of schools, and that this aspect of the guidance would have to be reconsidered.

Some authorities were able to move forward quite strongly on this aspect of the pilot, but others struggled to establish or exploit the necessary relationships with schools to allow an effective survey to take place - see 2.10 below. It became apparent that the relationship between an authority and its schools is absolutely critical to the success or otherwise of the survey, and that this could not be assumed – least of all in districts, where the relationship is a more distant one, but also to a degree in single tier authorities.

Child-friendliness was also an important dimension of the schools survey, particularly the paper versions. The wording changes have already been mentioned, but design considerations were also seen as important here and one authority did do a lot of

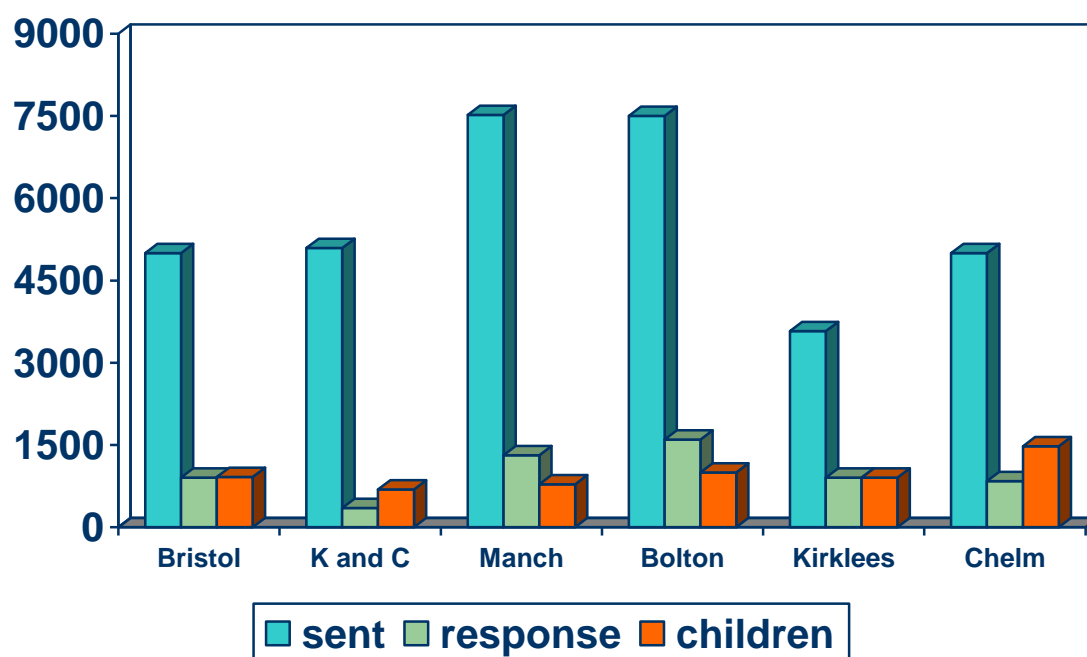
⁵ This is a Market Research Society requirement for work with younger people and was seen as obligatory for our work.

work to design a full colour survey form that would be attractive to children. Another, though, was criticised by its corporate colleagues for violating corporate publication guidelines – clearly these were too inflexible, but it is a serious point that may affect some authorities’ capacity to make surveys child-friendly.

2.5 Response rates – household survey

The Graph below shows the levels of response achieved in the household survey.

Graph 1: response rates for the household survey



Chelmsford, Bristol and Kensington and Chelsea followed the guidance and sent out around 5,000 forms. In Bristol, this resulted in a response of just over 900, a response rate below 20%; in Kensington and Chelsea, the response was just 350, a very disappointing 7% which is well below expectations. Chelmsford also secured a low response at 17% but got a good many more children than might have been expected from this result.

Manchester and Bolton both took advice from their research providers that the guidance recommendation might prove inadequate to achieve the required level of response, and sent out 7,500 forms each. In Manchester, this resulted in a response of 1,315 (17%), compared with Bolton's 1,597 or 21%. Both authorities thus achieved similar response rates to Bristol, and using a larger sample paid dividends in terms of securing more responses overall.

In Kirklees, the picture is quite different. Here a distribution of 3,576 was undertaken, through nine local schools which all provided contact details to a research provider who then sent questionnaires to children's parents, addressed to 'the parent/carer of firstname secondname'. This approach generated a higher response rate of 25%, securing 905 responses in total.

A key factor in the response rate was the number of children whose play was captured in the responses received. Only Chelmsford managed to achieve the target of 1,100 children, and actually secured play details for nearly 1,500 children through their household survey. In spite of the much larger mailout, Bolton and Manchester secured 998 and 780 children respectively, and Bristol's smaller mailout achieved a better number of children (918) than Manchester got with a 50% larger sample.

2.6 Response rates – schools survey

It is not possible to look at response rates in the schools survey, because the opportunity to take part cannot easily be measured, especially for those pilots which allowed online completion of the survey form; we simply don't know how many people had an opportunity to take part and declined it. We always recognised this weakness in the methodology and accepted it as the price to be paid to enable the inclusion of children as part of the indicator process. What we can examine, though, is the relative levels of participation by children, and the characteristics of child response, to see what the strengths and weaknesses of this methodology are.

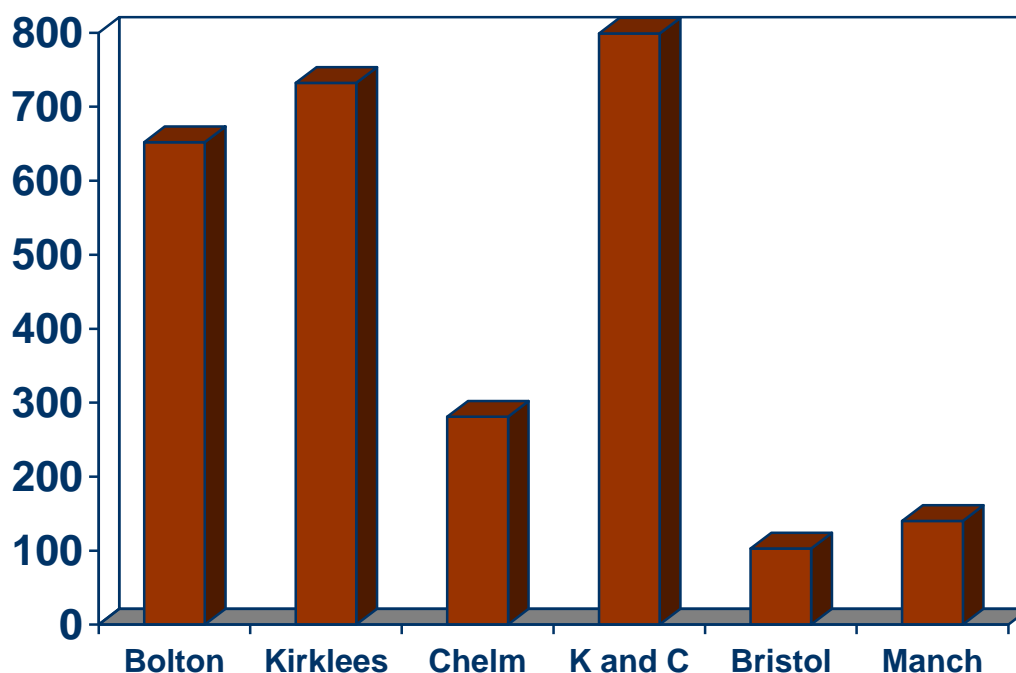
The initial guidance asked pilots to include at least one class group from each of years 5 to 10, from at least three primary and three secondary schools, with a limit to the proportion of independent schools in the sample. Authorities were permitted to

use either a paper completion basis or an online survey, or indeed a mixture of the two; the online surveys were hosted by Sheffield Hallam University and accessed by a link sent to participating schools, or were conducted using Viewpoint software and managed internally by the schools themselves.

The question wordings were in some cases simplified in language, and Kirklees even designed a multicoloured form to try and promote a more child-friendly approach to the schools survey.

This Graph shows the levels of response secured:

Graph 2: Numbers of respondents to schools survey



The levels of response are reasonable, and in three cases a good number of responses has been secured. In Bolton, the survey was undertaken online; in Kirklees, it was done on paper. In Kensington and Chelsea, the survey results combine a study using Viewpoint undertaken fairly early in the survey process with a paper based survey taken later in the process. Strictly speaking, these results

should not be combined as they were done at different times, but it simplifies analysis to allow them to stand together.

In contrast, the survey has been much less effective in gaining response in Chelmsford, Bristol and Manchester; in the latter two cases, there were genuine difficulties in securing school participation and a curtailed collection process as a result.

The success or otherwise of the schools survey depends enormously, and indeed stands or falls, on the willingness of schools to participate. It was always a concern of ours that this might be an issue and we attempted to support those authorities finding this difficult by providing suggestions as to how to encourage participation by schools. These included

- The use of schools liaison, particularly for district councils with less of a direct relationship with schools
- The use of cash or other incentives to encourage schools to participate;
- Making data available to schools to allow them to see the results and compare them with their counterparts;
- Drawing schools' attention to the relevance of this study as part of the citizenship, ICT, or PHSE curricula for their pupils.

All of these suggestions played their part, to a greater or lesser extent, and we were especially gratified to learn that the curriculum argument had been effective in several schools, particularly as the survey was done at a time (the end of term) when a pre-determined lesson plan was especially well-received. (Unfortunately, this would not coincide with our preferred timing for the survey). However, it quickly became apparent that the schools survey was primarily helped or hindered by the authority's relationship with its schools, and its ability to 'call in' favours from schools. Those authorities with strong relationships to schools were able to undertake the schools survey fairly readily, but there were two authorities – Manchester and Bristol – which struggled to secure the necessary participation and where the survey itself was significantly delayed as a consequence. Interestingly, we had expected the difficulties to be most pronounced for Chelmsford, which as a district does not have

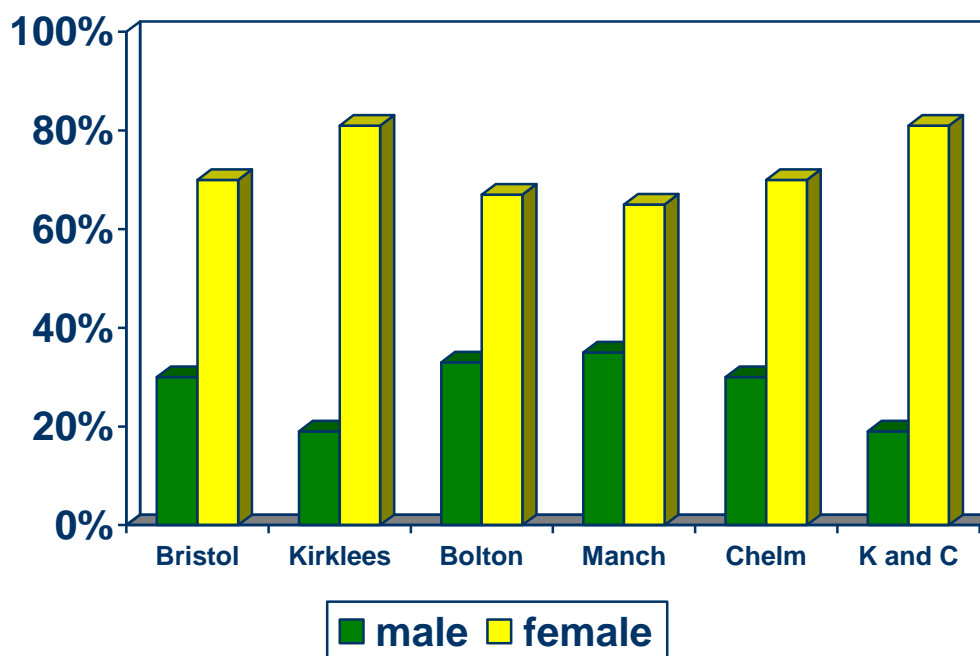
the same kind of relationship with schools as a first-tier authority, but this was not the case; we suspect, nevertheless, that many districts would struggle with this methodology and indeed our experience elsewhere of working with schools through district councils confirms this.

2.7 Response demography – household survey

We need also to explore how well the demography of response matches the profile of potential respondents, so as to see whether the survey methodology has resulted in an unrepresentative response according to key demographic characteristics that may affect propensity to play.

This needs to be examined in two ways; the characteristics of the respondent themselves, and also the characteristics of the children they identified in their responses. This Graph shows the gender of respondents themselves:

Graph 3: gender of person completing the household survey

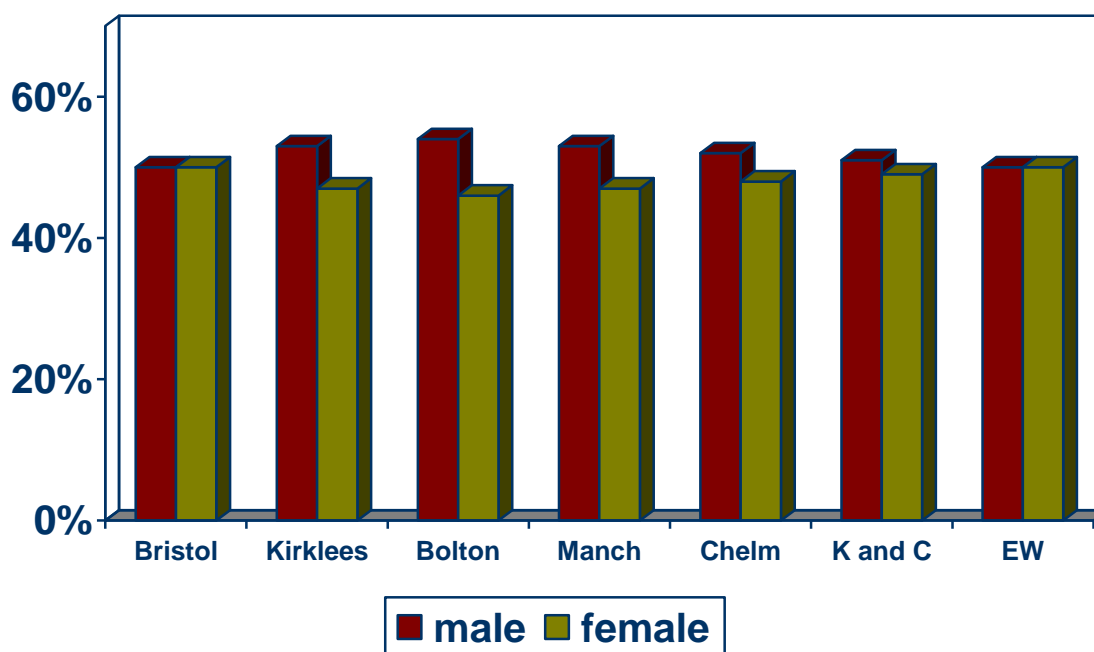


Response to the household survey was predominantly female, in some cases overwhelmingly so. In Bristol, Manchester, Chelmsford and Bolton, female

respondents outnumber men by two to one; in Kensington and Chelsea and Kirklees the proportion is nearer 4 to 1 in favour of female respondents. Although mothers do outnumber fathers or male carers in the general population (the majority of lone parents are women) this would not explain the wide difference between the genders in responding here; it appears that surveys concerned with children, or with play, are seen as essentially the responsibility or special interest of the female parent/carer – and this means that the views expressed are predominantly from a female perspective.

The gender of children is much less problematic, as this Graph illustrates:

Graph 4: gender of children included in household survey, with national comparator

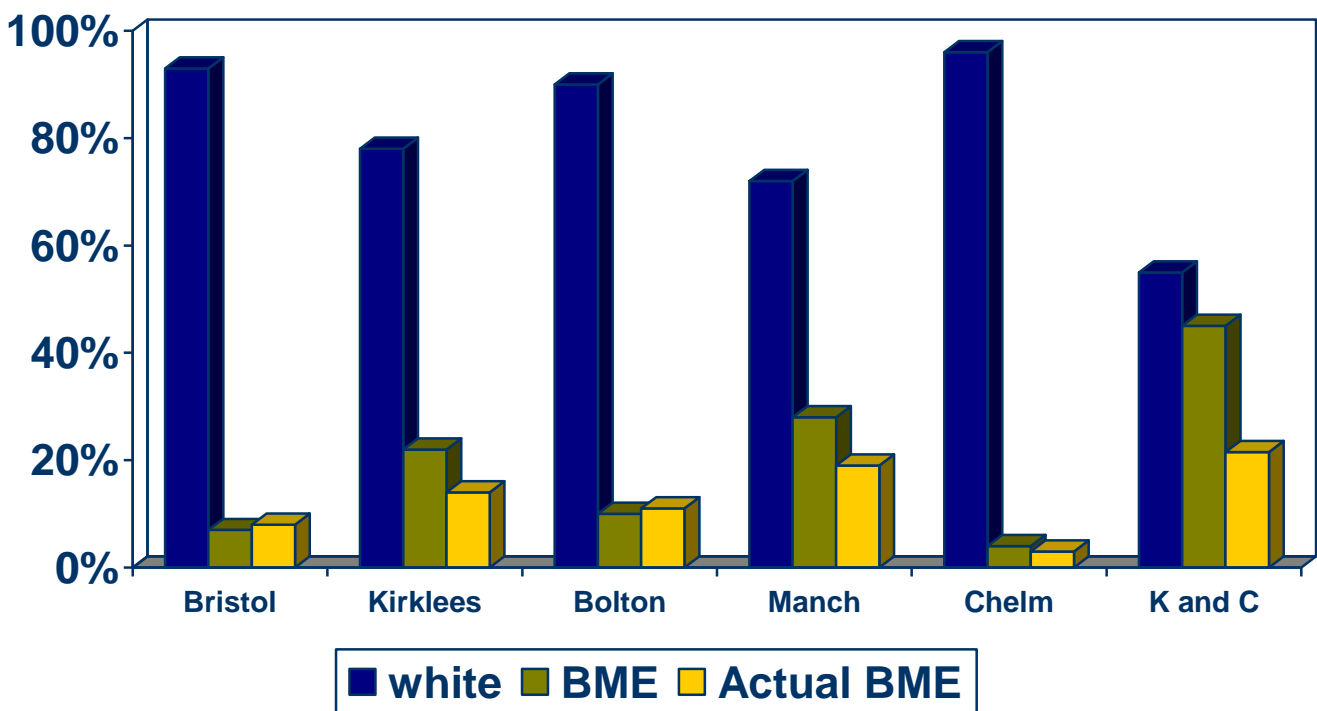


Nationally there are similar proportions of boys and girls in the population (gender differences only emerge significantly in old age, due to longer female life expectancy). In this sample, boys outnumber girls slightly (other than in Bristol), but the differences are not marked and could easily be corrected by weighting (this might

be highly desirable, as there is evidence that boys and girls have quite different play patterns).

We were also interested to see how well the survey penetrated Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, traditionally a hard to reach group especially for self-completion surveys. This Graph shows the proportions of respondents from white and BME communities:

Graph 5: ethnicity of person completing the household survey



In this and other Graph s, the column labelled “BME” is the proportion of BME participants in the survey, whilst “Actual BME” designates the proportion of BME people in the district’s population. The second figure includes people who have no children, who were less likely to respond the survey; this proportion might thus be expected to be greater than the proportion of BME respondents in the survey, which was largely limited to people with children.

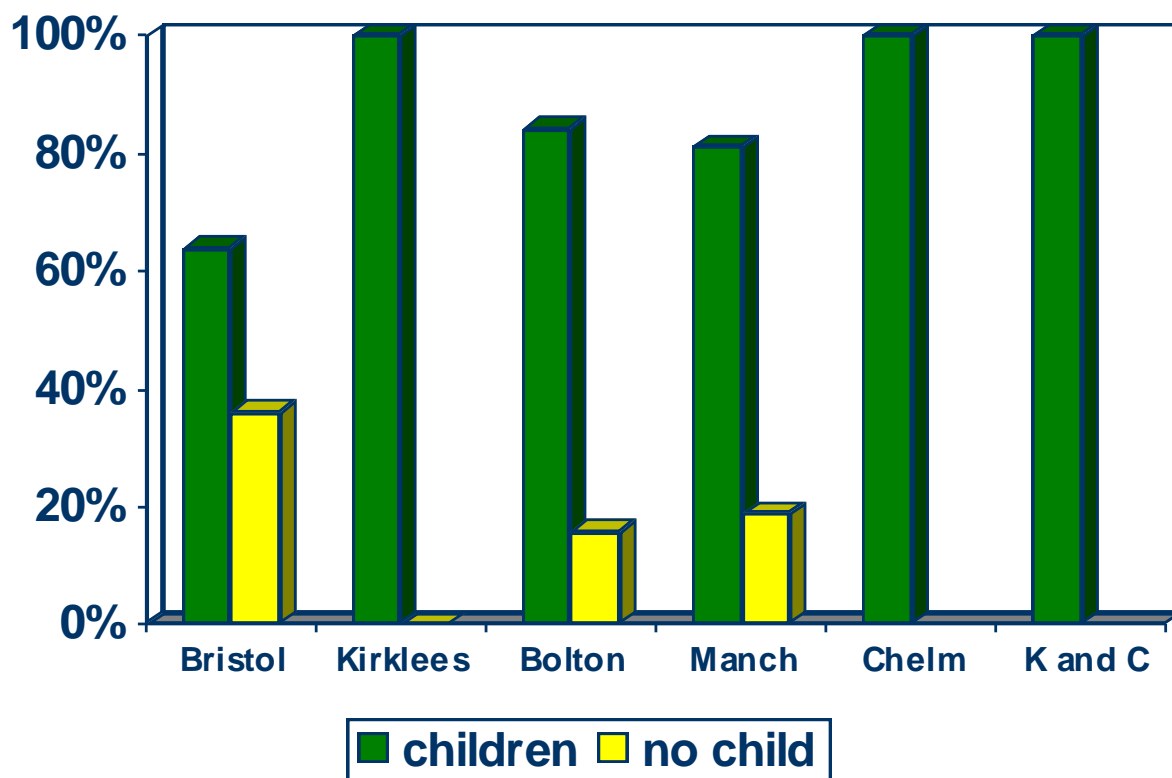
The response is predominantly from white communities, although we notice that in Kensington and Chelsea this includes quite a high proportion of non-British white people, reflecting the local population diversity.

In Bristol and Bolton, the proportion of BME responses is slightly lower than might be inferred from the BME presence in the local population. This is as might be expected, given that there is a greater resistance to surveys in the BME communities, at least partly because of language issues.

In Kirklees and Manchester, the proportions of BME respondents are actually higher than might have been expected; this is also true to a lesser extent in Chelmsford. In Kensington and Chelsea, though, the BME proportion is very high, indicating a very strong success in reaching minority communities in the borough.

Perhaps the most critical issue in respondent demography, though, was the presence or absence of children from the household. This actually varied quite widely, as shown in **Graph 6** below:

Graph 6: proportions of respondent households with/without resident children



As might be expected, given the subject matter of the study, the response was dominated by households with resident children. Nevertheless, in Bristol there was a substantial response from non-child households, and such households are also present in reasonably large numbers in Bolton and Manchester. and

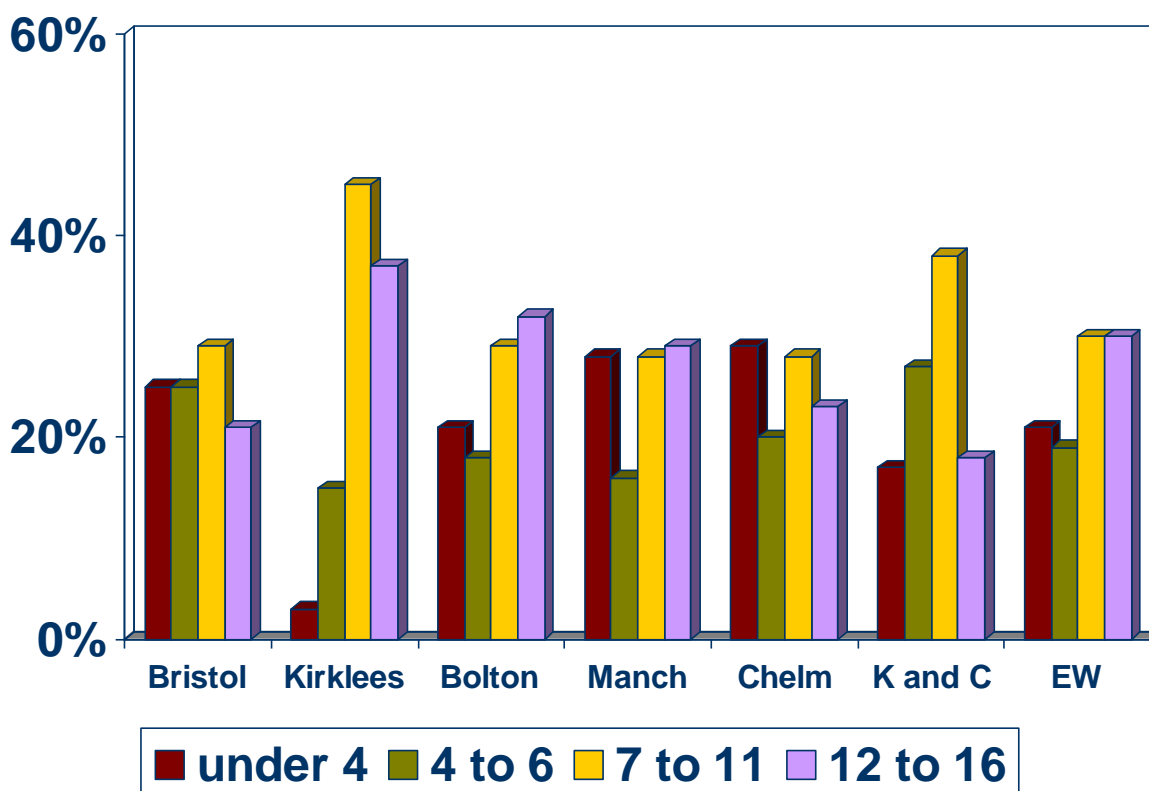
In Kirklees and Kensington and Chelsea, the survey distribution meant that only parents/carers were selected for the sample. In Chelmsford, no non-parents responded, in stark contrast to Bristol where a similar distribution was employed.

Given that the actual proportion of households containing children is around 29% nationally, the questionnaire has clearly been ignored by significant proportions of those who have received it. We had hoped that even childless households would have views about the extent and quality of play provision (not least because of some adults' perceptions about children) but this has not materialised. As a result, there has been a high degree of wastage in the household surveys undertaken using the

recommended sampling method. A small number of complaints was also received by some pilots referring to the apparent waste of sending a childless household a questionnaire along these lines.

It is also instructive to examine the profile of children identified in the survey. This Graph shows how the children are distributed by age (some ages have been imputed as not all pilots used the same age bands in their questionnaires).

Graph 7: age distribution of children included in household survey, with national comparator

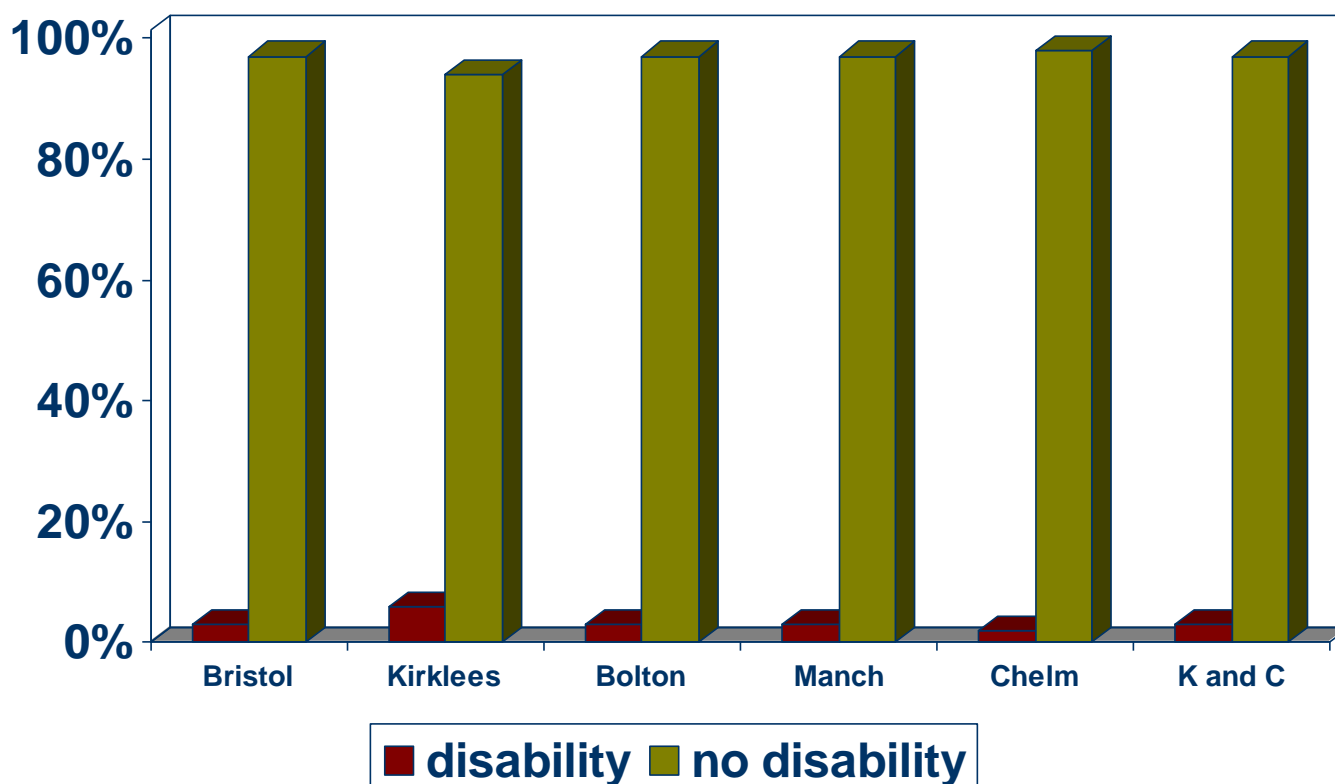


The far right set of columns shows how the child population of England and Wales breaks down into the four age-groups specified in the guidance, which in turn broadly correspond to levels of school attended. To be fully representative, the profiles of pilots should provide details of fairly equal proportions of pre-school and primary school children (around 20% each), and larger but again roughly equal proportions of junior and secondary age children (around 30% each).

In fact there is quite a variance in results across the pilots. Bolton approximates most closely to the national profile, but in Manchester and Chelmsford the proportions of very young children are rather higher than would be expected. Chelmsford and Bristol show lower than expected proportions of secondary age children. Nonetheless, the differences are not extreme and could be corrected by statistical weighting if necessary.

In Kirklees, it is striking that very few under 5s have been counted. This pilot used a distribution that differed in two key respects; the questionnaire was distributed through schools, to school age children; and it only asked for details of one child (the one having the most recent birthday). This should have resulted in a fairly even distribution, since birthdays are evenly distributed through the year, but in fact the sample has largely excluded children of non-school age. We suspect that many parents have completed the survey in respect of the child through whom it was obtained, rather than following the instructions on the form – and indeed children bring so many forms home to parents that it is entirely understandable that they should do so. This could have been avoided either by stressing the “recent birthday” message, or more convincingly by asking about all children in the household, not just one.

The questionnaire also asked respondents to indicate whether or not their children had any disability that affected their play. The answers here are self-defined by the respondents and the results are shown in **Graph 8** below

Graph 8: disability of children included in household survey

Although there is no direct national comparator, the proportions of children with disabilities look smaller than might have been expected. According to ONS, around 18% of children have some sort of disability (this includes what are described as “mild” disabilities as well as serious sensory, physical or mental impairment), whilst about 8% have “severe” disabilities. The most commonly reported disability is asthma, which accounts for over 40% of all disabilities declared. ONS also found, though, that disability was not necessarily a barrier to participation in sport and play, and noted the high popularity of swimming among children with disabilities, for example.⁶

⁶ Office of National Statistics, synthesis of reports from General Household Survey and Sport England surveys, see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=795> (accessed 16 March 2007)

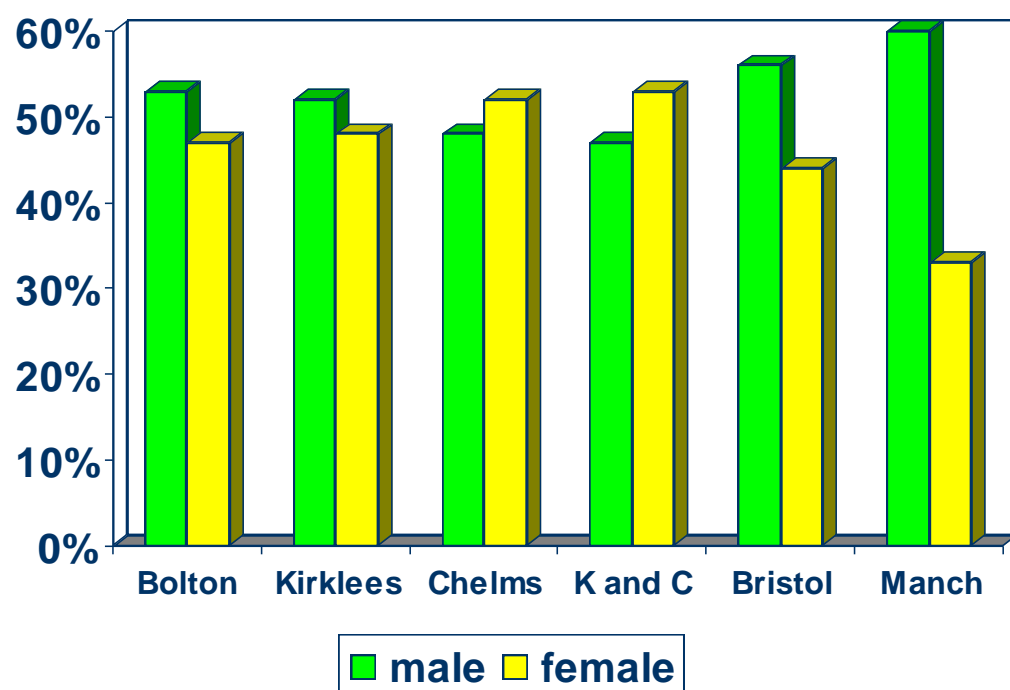
We identify two possible reasons for this apparent undercounting of disability: either parents have ignored disabled children when thinking about outdoor play, or parents take the view that their child’s disability does not inhibit their play to the extent that they wish to declare it as a limiting factor.

2.8 Response demography – schools survey

As with the household survey, we need to examine the demography of respondents to the schools survey to see whether or not the aspirations of the guidance were met, and what if any biases can be identified in the patterns of response.

This Graph shows the gender of respondents to the schools survey:

Graph 9: gender of respondents to the schools survey

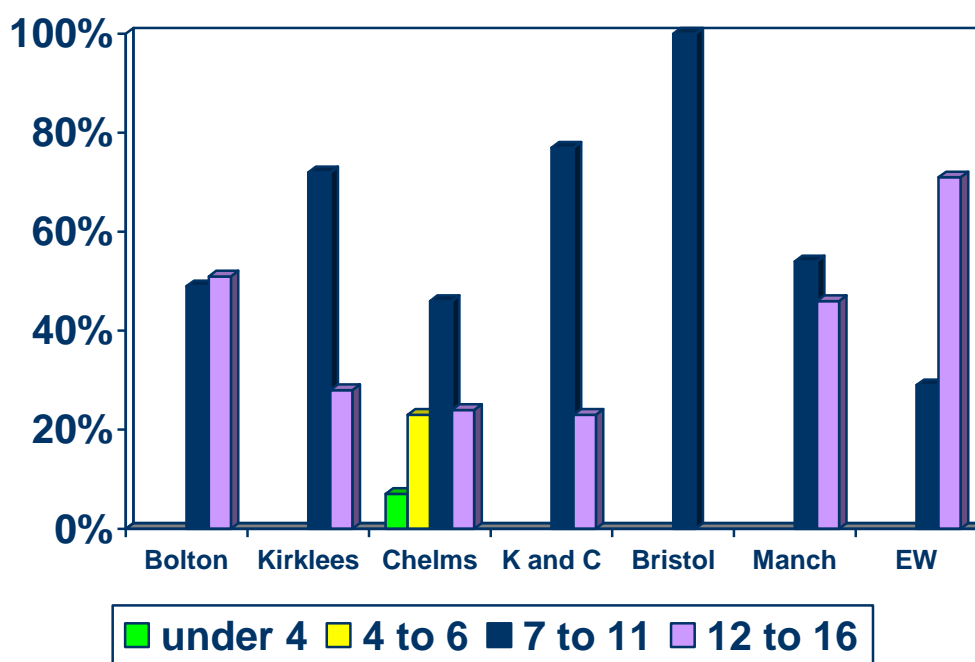


Although there are variations, the pattern of response is fairly even with similar numbers of girls and boys taking part (the actual proportions in the population are close to 50/50). Even the exclusively online approach of Bolton has not led to any substantial gender bias in favour of boys, although in Bristol and Manchester, which also used online approaches, the position is different and boys predominate fairly

small samples. The gender results for the schools survey are thus quite similar to the genders of children captured in the household study.

Unlike the household survey, the schools survey guidance specified the ages of children who should be asked to complete it – though authorities were allowed to broaden the age range if they wished, they also had to ensure that the target ages were covered. This Graph shows how well that was achieved:

Graph 10: age of respondents to the schools survey



The requirement specified years 5 to 10, which equates to ages 9 to 16. The right hand pair of columns in this Graph (“EW”) shows the national proportions of children in the two upper years of primary school and in the first four years of secondary school respectively, and is the result that might reasonably have been expected from an entirely level playing field in sampling terms.

In fact no pilot comes near this result, and most have a very strong bias in favour of primary school age children, and include in their results several children below the target age range. Bristol only managed to get primary schools to participate. Only

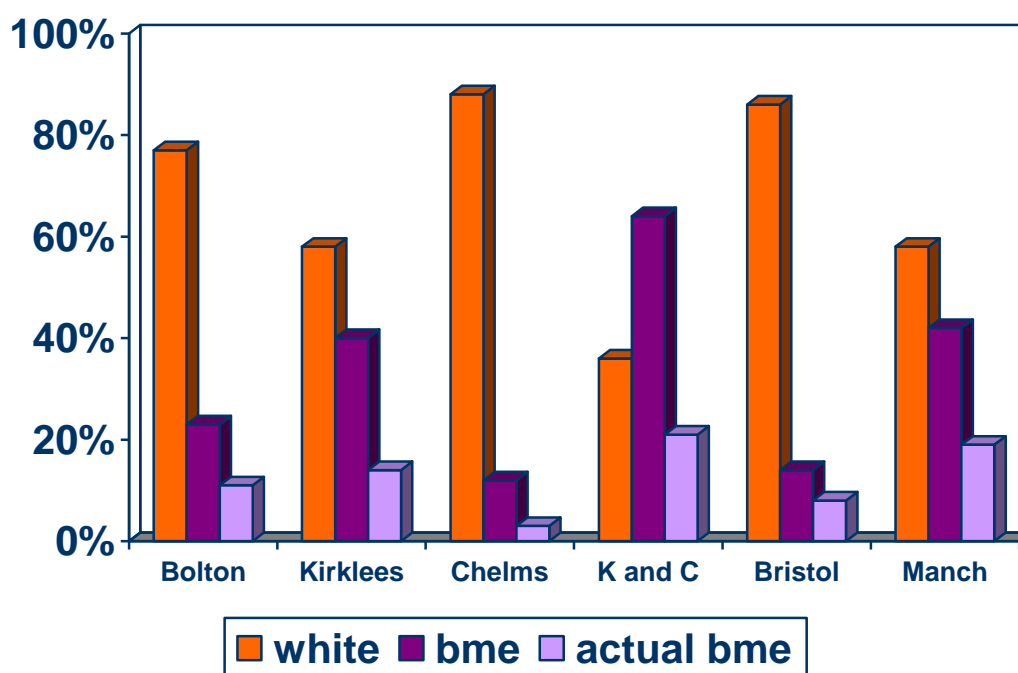
Bolton succeeded in getting significant input from secondary age children (Manchester’s proportion is similar but the volume is much lower), and even there they account for just over half of the sample when an even distribution would have called for around two-thirds of the overall response. In Kirklees the response is strongly weighted in favour of primary school age children, and relatively few secondary school children have taken part.

We suspect that the availability of online completion is a factor here. Bolton and Manchester took an exclusively online approach; the others (Bristol aside) used paper or a mixed methodology. Online may have been the deciding factor in getting secondary schools on board, and online completion is certainly more readily within secondaries’ capacity; in primary schools, the ratio of computers to pupils is on the whole considerably lower.

Chelmsford reports response from very young children; we need to examine this further as it seems unlikely that children as young as 4 have completed the survey.

The ethnicity of respondents to the schools survey is shown below:

Graph 11: Ethnicity of respondents to schools survey



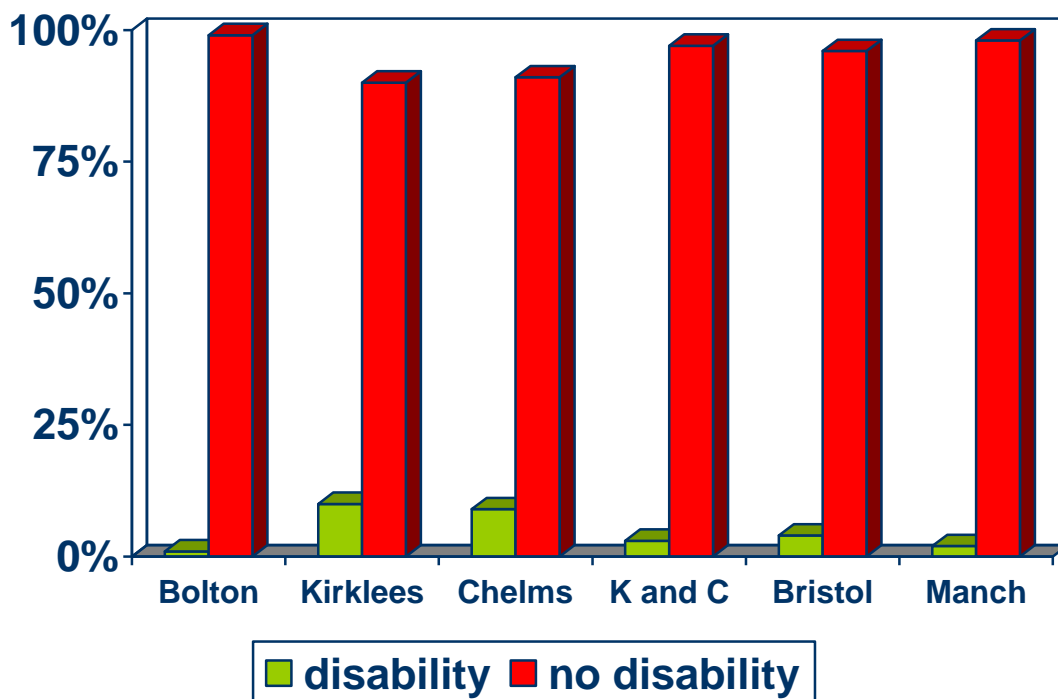
In this and other Graphs, the column labelled “BME” is the proportion of BME participants in the survey, whilst “Actual BME” designates the proportion of BME people (adults as well as children) in the district’s population. The second figure includes people who have no children, who were less likely to respond the survey; this proportion might thus be expected to be greater than the proportion of BME respondents in the survey, which was largely limited to people with children. On the other hand, the actual BME proportions may be being understated because BME families tend to have higher numbers of children than their white counterparts.

Even so, it is particularly interesting to see the high levels of response from what is normally considered a hard to reach group. The survey has not proven at all difficult for BME students to complete and if anything their presence in the sample exceeds what might have been expected. Indeed in Kensington and Chelsea the BME presence in the overall result exceeds that of the white participation by some distance, even though white students are the largest single ethnic group in the sample.

The results will clearly be influenced by the selection of schools taking part, since BME communities tend to be concentrated geographically and are not evenly distributed across the school population. If there is a difference between the answers given by BME students and those from white students, this would be an important consideration in the viability of the schools survey – but it is an interesting problem, as the issue in a self-completion methodology is more commonly addressing *under-representation* of the BME communities.

As to disability, these are the children’s own declarations in respect of limitations to play:

Graph 12: Children with disabilities in the schools survey



Both Kirklees and Chelmsford include reasonable proportions of children with disabilities, but at Kensington and Chelsea, Manchester and Bolton these proportions are quite small. This may be because children with disabilities were somehow excluded from the survey (and these are three authorities that used an online mechanism for part or all of their survey) or it may be because children with disabilities do not see these as inevitably limiting their play. Either way, the results are comparable to those of the household survey and well below the expected levels of disability as would be predicted from the 18% figure provided by ONS.

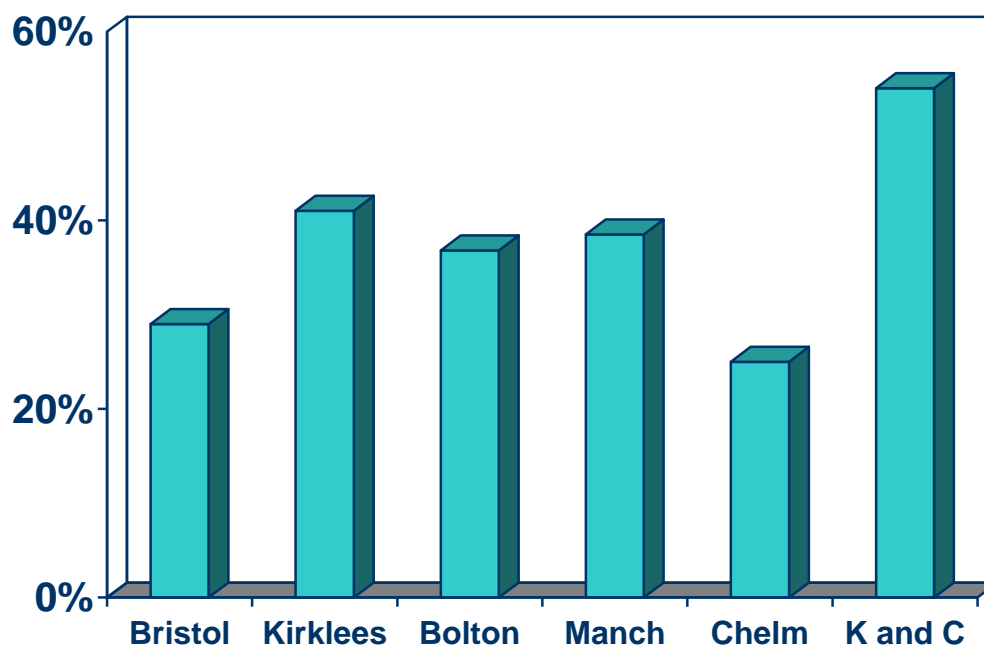
2.9 Indicator results

To calculate the hours of play, it was necessary to translate the answers given for each play opportunity into an average number of hours, and then to total these for each child being reported on. This was explained very briefly at the first network day but it is clear from the reports that this was not correctly handled by some of the pilots, nor indeed by their research contractors. We therefore issued revised guidance on this calculation, stating in detail how it should be done.

Where possible, we have redone the calculation (or at least verified it) to assure ourselves that the data we are reporting is correct.

These are parents' assessments of their children's play:

Graph 13: proportion of children who played outside for 4 hours or more, as measured by parents/carers

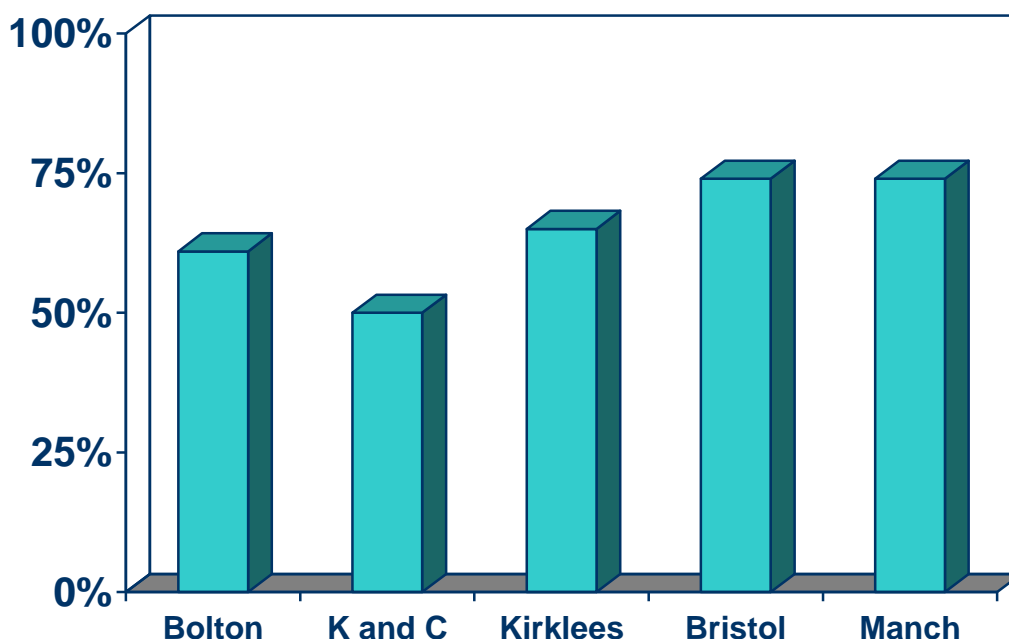


The variation in results between pilots may be misleading, as not all the surveys took place simultaneously – and this emphasises the importance of the timetable in defining how this survey should be done. In all but Kensington and Chelsea, the

results indicate that less than half of children played outside for an average of 4 hours or more during the four weeks in question, which for many included at least one week in November – not normally the most propitious time for outdoor play. Kensington and Chelsea’s results are undoubtedly influenced by the inclusion of half-term in their survey window, so comparison between pilots is difficult. The results may be considered fairly high for a time of year when indoor play is probably preferred or dictated by climate.

Graph 14 provides children’s response to the participation indicator:

Graph 14: proportion of children playing outside for 4 hours or more



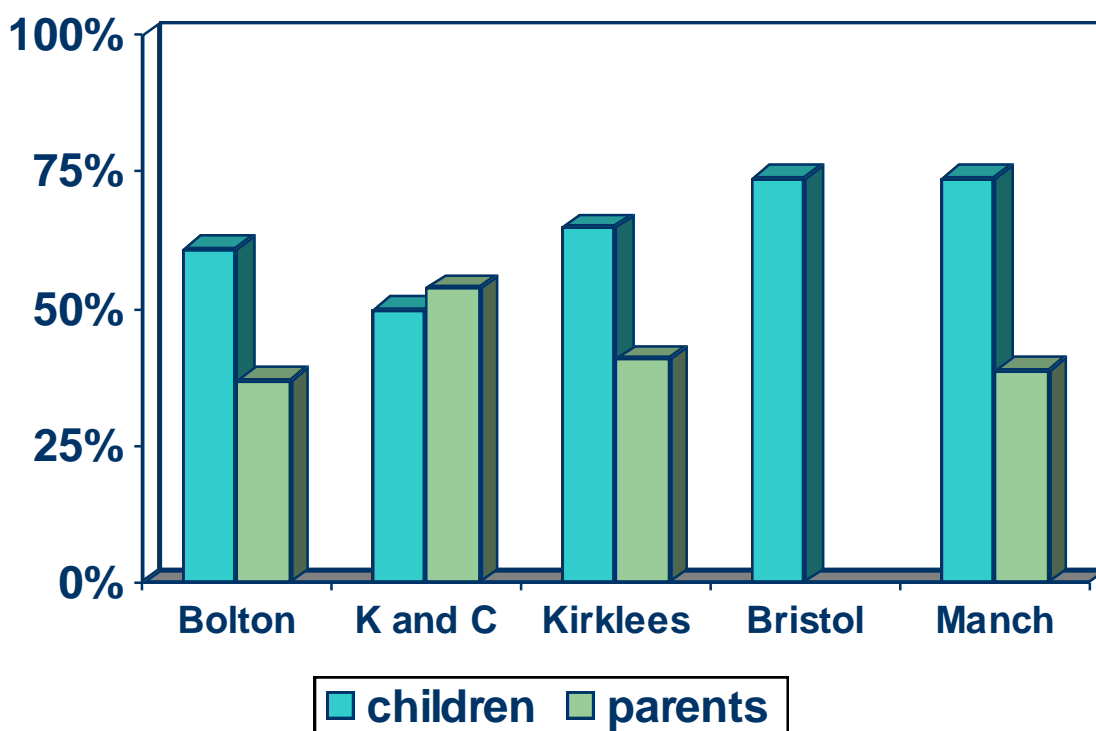
Caution should be exercised in comparing the results as the surveys were not all undertaken at exactly the same time of year. Moreover, many of the Kensington and Chelsea children were not asked this question, as the authority was not confident about younger children’s capacity to estimate time accurately.

In all the authorities for whom this calculation has been made, at least 50% of children said they had played outside for a total of 4 hours or more, a figure that

seems fairly high in the context of a survey taken outside the holiday periods and in autumn.

It is also interesting to set these results against the estimates from parents:

Graph 15: parents and children’s estimates of time spent playing: proportions of children playing outside for 4 hrs or more

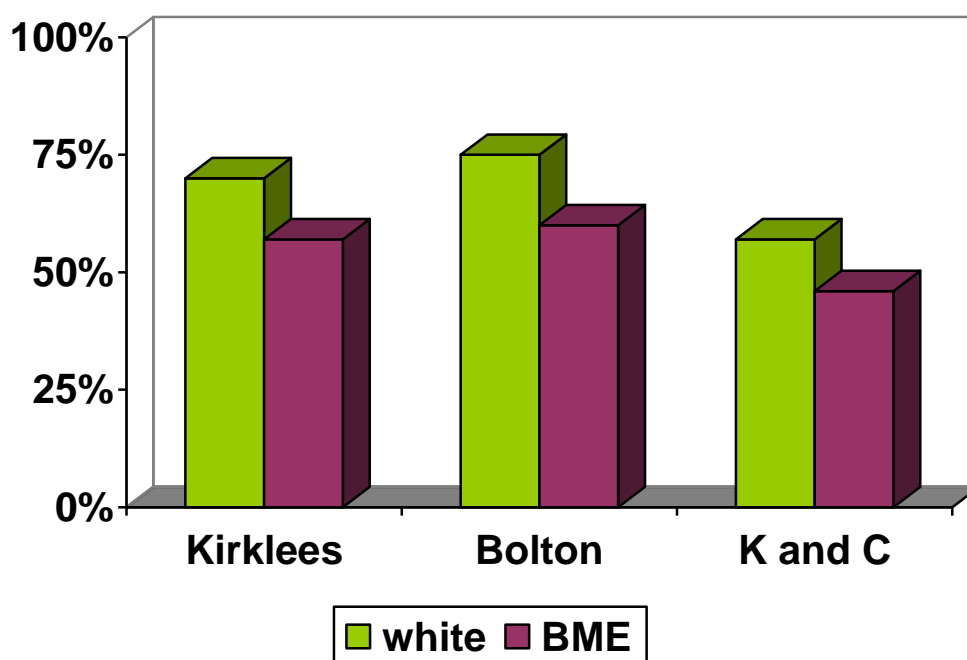


It is noticeable that the time estimates of children exceed those of adults. In Manchester, Bolton and Kirklees, the difference is a significant one, but in Kensington and Chelsea the different result may be attributable to the fact that Kensington and Chelsea did not put this question to younger children in their sample – in other words, we think Kensington and Chelsea may have proven the point that younger children in particular have a limited capacity to answer this question accurately.

So who is the more credible assessor of the time children spend playing? We know that parents' capacity to answer will be less accurate for older children (due to ignorance of their precise whereabouts) but we also strongly suspect that younger children have a limited ability to measure time accurately. We are reluctant to suggest a combined indicator which uses the older children's answers in combination with those of the parents/carers of younger children, because we do not feel confident about where to draw the boundary between the two.

The sample profile, in favour of BME children, also requires us to examine the effect of this on the result. We have this result for three of the pilots:

Graph 16: Ethnicity and hours played



In fact in all three authorities the outside play of white children is higher than that of BME children, by between 10 and 15 percentage points; the more BME children are over-represented in the sample, therefore, the lower the result will be. This means that results would need to be weighted to correct for this imbalance – otherwise it

would be possible to manipulate the result by ensuring the sample is biased towards white children.

2.10 Feedback from pilots

The participation indicator questions were asked in both the household survey and the school survey. To avoid repetition, feedback about the household survey method is reported here, whilst feedback about the school survey method is reported in the satisfaction indicators' chapter. However, feedback on both surveys' results regarding the participation indicator is reported in this section.

2.10.1 Response rates

The response rates achieved are not systematically higher for one distribution method compared with the other. The lowest response of the pilots, 7.5%, is at Kensington and Chelsea, who attempted a more focused distribution via schools. They suggest this may have been because of a JAR survey at around the same time, a low incentive (£50 prize draw in the form of an M&S voucher) and/or language constraints. It is also likely that the distribution method was partly to blame - relying on children to take the questionnaire home. At Kirklees, the other focussed distribution through schools, household questionnaires were distributed by post to parents of children at schools which participated in the schools survey. Letters were addressed to the parent or guardian of a named child. A good response was received (25%); no reminders were sent - and Kirklees feel it would have been higher but for the fact that three other surveys on similar subjects had been recently sent.

2.10.2 Responses from no-child households

At Bristol, 35% of responses were from no-child households, with only one complaint. There are no obvious reasons for this positive response - the covering letter was that specified in the guidance. Nevertheless, Bristol feel that the survey could be merged with another survey which would include more questions relevant to adults.

At the other extreme, at Chelmsford, no-child households did not respond, but there is no obvious reason for this. The number of surveys that had been undertaken

recently may have influenced the response rate at Chelmsford - people were perceived to be 'surveyed out'.

At Manchester, there were no complaints from no-child households about them being included (and they had the second highest response from such households). About 40 phone calls were received from people - mainly older people without children - who were confused as to whether they had to fill it in or not. It was felt to be an official document from the Council. Clarification was therefore the issue, not complaint. Manchester did not add any extra questions to make it more appropriate to those without children. They feel that the reason for the high response from such households may be that people in Manchester are generally interested in the parks and in what young people are doing.

2.10.3 Other household survey issues

Manchester's coordinator had not managed a household survey before and felt a lack of support from central services. The reason central services were not interested is that play is not considered very serious. It is difficult to raise the profile of play. Crime and Disorder and the Respect agendas are considered more important – play needs to link in with these. There may be potential for a consortium of local authorities to arrange for a collective contract, although there might be problems with different procurement policies, and possibly different extra questions for each authority (two of the pilots added one or more questions to the standard questionnaire).

The pilot exercise did not test seasonality and weather differences sufficiently, so it is difficult to decide when the best time for the household survey is. Bolton feel that May or September/October would be the best times. Chelmsford recommends conducting the survey away from holiday periods, and probably before the summer holidays. Kensington and Chelsea suggest that the important thing is getting the timing right in relation to other surveys and tasks which are going on, such as strategy development, JAR, BVPI surveys, etc.

Bristol recommends starting earlier e.g. supply the guidance in April in order to run the survey in September and other pilots agreed that a longer lead time than the pilot

allowed would not just make life easier, but allow for more flexible planning with respect to other surveys.

2.10.4 Guidance document

There were mixed views about the guidance for the household questionnaire. At one extreme, Bolton's contractor was not happy with the guidance - they found it hard to interpret. At the other extreme, for Bristol the guidance was clear and easy to follow.

For Chelmsford, there is a lack of clarity in the definitions - the questionnaire failed to make it clear whether questions were referring to the local situation or anywhere.

The reference to 'beaches' exacerbated this problem. The survey took place just after the half term holiday when some people had been away. It should refer to 'local playing out' rather than just 'playing out' (Chelmsford included the word 'local').

At Chelmsford, the questionnaire asked respondents to return the form to the contractor's address in Yorkshire. This was a mistake - the return address should have been Chelmsford BC. As a result the Council received a number of phone calls expressing concern about sending details of children to an unknown organisation.

Bolton feel that the guidance should have been sharper on how to calculate the participation PI.

2.10.5 Reliability of results

Several pilots feel that their participation indicator scores are low. Bristol feel that there may have been an under-reporting by parents of the hours played out because of the negative connotation of the phrase 'hanging out'. Low reporting of hours played out may be due to the high proportion of younger children in the sample. It is also felt that reported hours of playing out would be less than if the survey had taken place earlier in the autumn, rather than in November. A separate survey undertaken by Bristol measuring visits to a playground found that the number of visits dropped off significantly at this time of year: 5265 visits in October; 3385 in November. At Chelmsford, the results of the participation PI are lower than their previous understanding, possibly because of the time of the survey. Manchester's result is perceived by them to be a good result given that the survey went out in mid-November when it was darker and colder. However, Kensington and Chelsea's

survey was also conducted in November, yet they had the highest participation indicator score.

For most of the pilots the participation indicator score was higher from the children's school survey responses than from the parents' household survey responses. There is a general feeling that younger children particularly find questions about time difficult to understand and do not have a good concept of time. Asking children to think back for four weeks may not produce reliable results. Bristol had responses only from primary schools and they had the widest divergence in participation indicator results. Kirklees feel that younger people are likely to be unreliable in their reporting of time spent playing out - "Children don't live by the clock". Manchester's school survey results were generally felt to be questionable due to the young average age of the children responding - 80% primary (mainly 8 – 9 year olds). Kensington and Chelsea decided primary school children would not be asked about the number of hours played in their school survey, because it was felt that time is a difficult concept for younger children as is the concept of 'played out'. Therefore, Kensington and Chelsea only asked secondary school children about hours 'played out' and there was much more correlation between the participation indicator scores of parents and children in this authority than in the other pilots. The one slightly dissenting voice was Bolton, who feel that children's perceptions are more representative and interesting but the parent's validation of this is important.

2.10.6 Usefulness of participation indicator data

For Bolton, it has been very useful and has reinforced some assumptions made in their play strategy. It will be used as part of the evidence for the JAR, and will feed into the Children's Plan. Also the PCT has expressed an interest and it will be used to lever funding on health related issues; there are targets on reducing obesity. The information will also provide a baseline for work with a more neighbourhood focus.

At Bristol there is some overlap with previous surveys e.g. a survey on quality of parks. Bristol will definitely use the data; they will map the results to see the relationship between the four indicators.

At Chelmsford it is used in the Play Strategy, which is at first draft stage. However, the results for the participation indicator is of limited value because there is no

previous evidence to compare with. If the objective is to increase participation, it is difficult to set a target. Chelmsford would use the data to compare performance year on year but not with other authorities. Population density makes a difference. There are structural determinants that impact on participation so it is not reasonable to compare against other authorities - e.g. Chelmsford has 27 parish councils, a third of which are rural (yet ONS labels Chelmsford as 'urban'). It has 465 people per km², compared with 13,000 in Kensington and Chelsea, and 1800 in Bolton. Many children play in gardens - the type of housing in Chelmsford encourages this, but it is excluded in the participation indicator. The questionable comparability is especially the case with two tier authorities. The fact that play provision is discretionary further undermines the comparability of this indicator across authorities in the eyes of Chelmsford, although this could be used as an important reason for comparing across authorities.

For Manchester, the household survey worked well – it is a good piece of evidence - but it is too late to contribute to the play strategy, which was written in 2006 and reviewed in late 2006.

At Kensington and Chelsea the participation indicator data has not yet been used, but they think it is potentially very useful.

2.10.7 Costs of household survey

The lower costs of the focused approach of Kensington and Chelsea and Kirklees are apparent from the following comparisons of resources used in the household survey:

- Bolton = 4 man-days + £16,000 for the household survey.
- Bristol = 100 hours for main coordinator + £11,692 for the household survey.
- Chelmsford = 10 hours + £10,900 for the household survey.
- Manchester = 2-3 days + £14,900 for the household survey.
- Kensington and Chelsea = 6 days (setting up and analysis) + 10 days total for two people stuffing envelopes + £443 data entry + £50 incentive
- Kirklees = 1 day + part of £6,050 for both household and school surveys.

However, low cost does not necessarily translate into higher cost-effectiveness - Kensington and Chelsea's survey had the lowest response. Bristol felt that encouraging a web based response would cut costs. This has been successfully achieved for their children's quality of life survey.

2.10.8 Value for money of household survey and participation indicator

The value for money of this indicator is questioned at Bolton because it only gives 'ex post' reinforcement of plans. However, their previous evidence was from consultations over strategy implementation proposals, and from evidence of wear and tear, complaints, etc., so they did not have survey evidence before. If Bolton repeated it, they would not do the whole authority (too expensive) but would do specific geographical areas for specific reasons (e.g. refurbishment).

It is difficult for Bristol to say yet whether or not the household survey was worth the money, because the full results had only just been received at the time of the feedback interview. Chelmsford would want to repeat the household survey in 5 years, or in 3 years combined with their BVPI survey. Manchester think that the household survey was good value for money. For Kirklees the household survey was good value for money overall - it has given them a number of avenues of enquiry rather than definite answers.

2.11 Issues arising

From the patterns of response, we have reached these conclusions:

- We note the low response, and the high wastage, to the household survey with its focus on children's play. Clearly many households have simply ignored or binned the survey, seeing it as irrelevant to them. This has several consequences:
 - Lower response rates mean statistical confidence in the results is affected;
 - The high levels of non-response indicate significant wastage of resource in preparing mailings and in postage costs
 - There was a limited number of complaints from residents challenging the council on the grounds that the survey was irrelevant to them, but this was not

true across all the pilots and is not seen as of itself a factor that would affect our overall view on viability

- We had anticipated this to some extent by suggesting to pilots that there was scope for augmenting the basic questions required for the indicators with some additional questions of their own, which could have broadened out the relevance of the survey. However, non-parents do have concerns about children and play opportunities and we feel there was an opportunity missed here – though it would be difficult to specify in the guidance.
- Closely linked to this is the question of cost-effectiveness. On the face of it, the Kirklees approach has secured a much more cost-effective outcome than the general survey. However, this has also resulted in a degree of compromise on both sampling and data gathering, with little or no control over the distribution of questionnaires, and the failure of parents at large to respond as instructed. Having said that, the only significant bias to have emerged from this approach is over the age of the children covered by the survey. We are conscious that the Kirklees approach makes for a much more targeted and less wasteful survey, though, and think this must carry a good deal of weight. We think the problem of incorrect response can be addressed through inclusion of multiple children in the survey form, but we have serious doubts over the capacity of authorities at large (especially those beyond the pilot) to use a distribution method that relies so much on school co-operation.
- The survey needs to be conducted at an appropriate time. Our discussions have concluded that there is only one window in the year that would meet the necessary requirements of consistent timing, reduced vulnerability to weather and darkness, and avoidance of holiday periods; this is in the first half of the autumn term.
- The variations in the demographic patterns of response suggest that weighting may be needed to correct for age and gender imbalances in the profile. We think this may be important because, as is seen from the pilots' own reports, there are variations in patterns of play according to the age and gender of children, and not to weight the results would mean that the results would be unduly influenced by

the presence or absence of different age groups in the profile. However, we have concerns about the capacity of local authorities generally (not the pilots necessarily) to apply weightings correctly, and note that DCLG does not allow authorities to weight their own results in its Best Value surveys. The need to submit data to a third party for weighting would clearly have resource implications for the survey.

- We note the apparent underreporting of children with disabilities. Although we incline to the view that parents are suggesting that disability does not impair the capacity for play, we cannot prove this. It may be that we should ask two questions, one seeking information about disabilities and a second asking whether or not any declared disability inhibits the capacity for play.
- The calculation for the participation indicator needs to be made much clearer in the guidance.
- Comparability between authorities may be affected by other issues outside the scope of this study that could be examined more closely, or eliminated, by the use of family groups for comparison.
- Where it works, the schools survey is an effective mechanism for the inclusion of children in an issue that concerns them greatly, and this inclusion dimension carries heavy weight for us; we are not sure that we should accept parents' opinions as a proxy for those most directly affected by the range and quality of local provision, or parents' knowledge of what their children have been doing whilst out of the house. However, we accept the pilots' view that children are liable to be inaccurate in their appraisal of time spent.
- We have serious concerns about the viability of a survey that seems to depend so heavily on the inconstant and inconsistent relationship between the authority and its local schools. It seems to us that even those authorities with good schools relationships are more likely to depend on their more friendly schools to secure this kind of data, whilst several authorities – at district but also at first-tier level - seem likely to struggle to achieve even a modest sampling requirement.

- The selection of schools has a significant impact on the sample structure, particularly as regards ethnicity, but it may not be possible to provide specific guidance on how to select schools because the number of schools varies widely between authorities, making it impossible to specify numbers of schools or even proportions of schools that should take part. Whilst it may be good practice, and highly important to performance, to secure schools' participation, we must question the comparability of these results between local authorities when they are so dependent on local idiosyncrasies.
- The schools survey has thrown up some additional issues that need to be factored in to any subsequent guidance. The desirability of an online mechanism for secondary schools is important, and also eases both logistics and data collection/analysis considerably. It may also improve acceptability of the lesson-plan argument for participation. However, there needs to be clearer guidance on security issues and on survey hosting to enable authorities that are less familiar with this type of approach to tackle it confidently.
- The timetabling of a schools survey needs to incorporate additional time for establishing or exploiting the relationships with schools, and for the technical dimensions of security and hosting. However, this needs to be planned beforehand, so that the timing of the survey itself is not compromised (as happened in some instances in this study).
- We warm to the idea of using a child-friendly approach, in language and in format, for the schools survey. This seems entirely appropriate; however, we point out that what appeals to a young child may look very immature to an older child respondent, and may discourage honest response. We therefore think that guidance should encourage child-friendliness but within the bounds of age-sensitivity.
- In our view the schools survey achieves far more in terms of inclusion, and in demonstrating a commitment to consulting children, than it does to the data needed for accurate performance management on participation. Whilst it may be useful and valuable, the lack of accuracy in sampling, the difficulty of asking children questions that are really better answered by adults, and the sheer

practicality of the mechanism, lead us to conclude that this is not a suitable methodology for the participation indicator.

3 Satisfaction Indicator

3.1 Definition

The satisfaction indicator sought to establish the opinions of children on the range and quality of play provision in their locality. The precise definition is

The percentage of children and young people from all social and ethnic groups, including those who are disabled, who think that the range and quality of play facilities and spaces they are able to access in their local neighbourhood is good/very good.

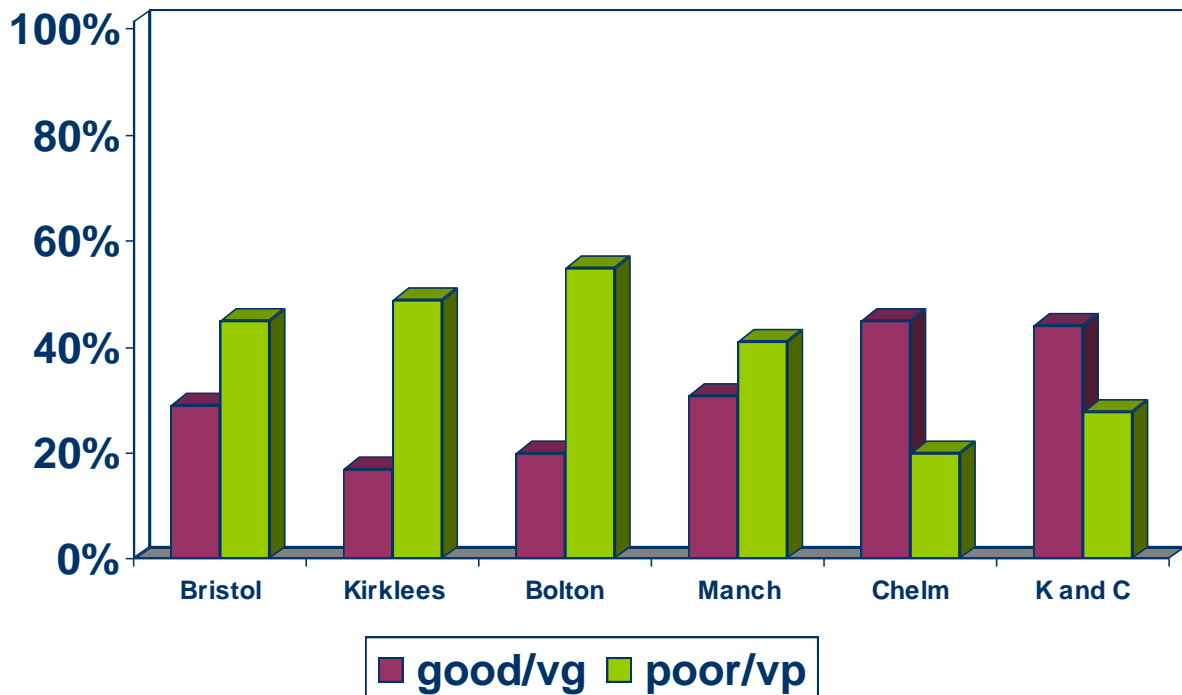
The measurement was to be undertaken using a survey of parents (the household survey), and/or a survey of children themselves, referred to as the schools survey. The methodology varied between the two approaches and both are discussed below. The pilot sought to establish which of the approaches used generated the most reliable and cost-effective results.

The methodology and demography for the two surveys, were reported for the participation indicator in section 2 (see Sections 2.3 to 2.8).

3.2 Indicator Results – household survey

Graph 17 below shows parents' and carers' opinions of the range of play facilities in their local area:

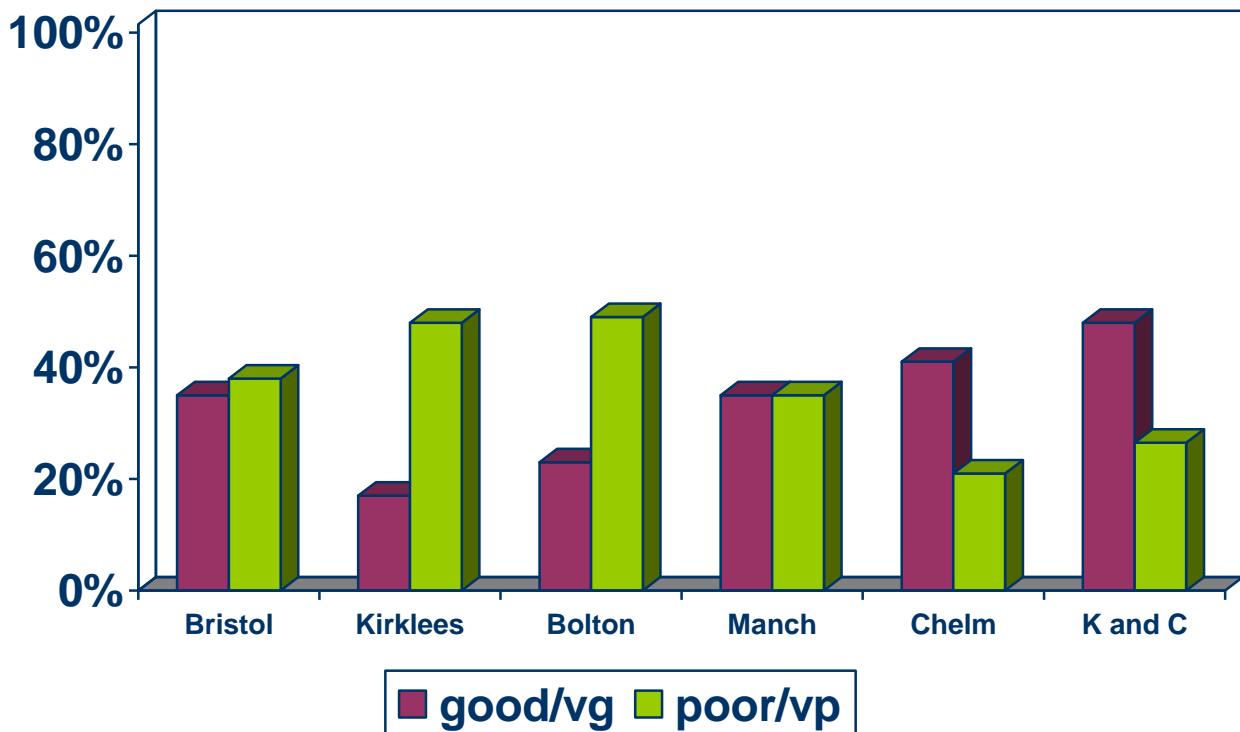
Graph 17: Opinions as to range of play opportunities



In four of the pilot authorities, the proportions of adults who are critical of the range of play spaces outweighs the proportion who are positive, and in Kirklees and Bolton this difference is especially marked. The results in Chelmsford and Kensington and Chelsea are quite different, with a majority opinion on the positive side of the equation.

A similar question was asked as regards the quality of play facilities, with these results:

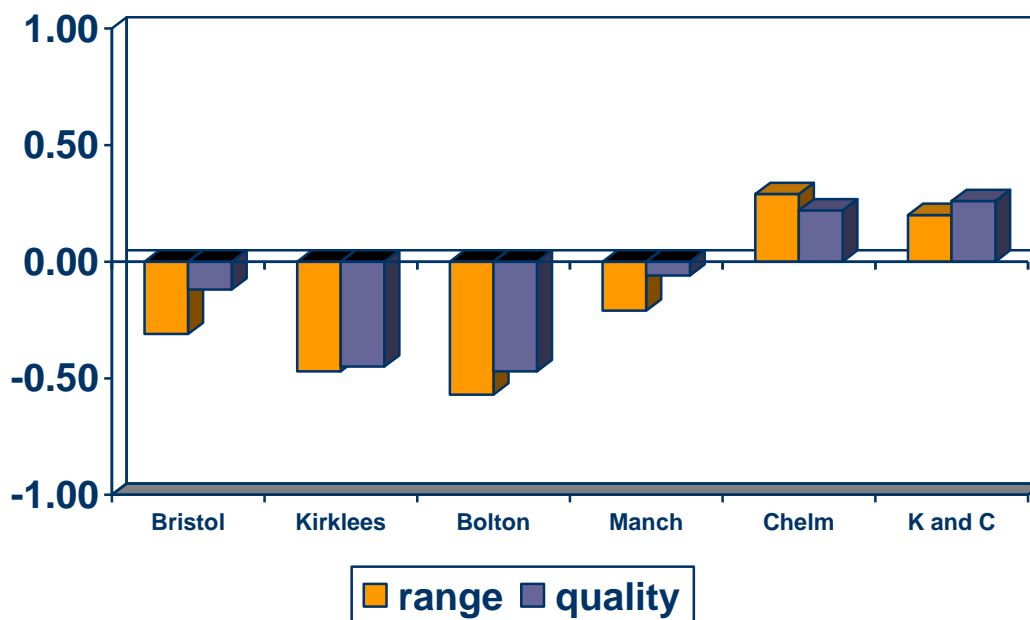
Graph 18: opinions as to quality of play opportunities



In Bristol and Manchester, opinion is evenly divided between those who take a positive view and those who are negative. In Kirklees and Bolton, critics outweigh those who are positive by some distance, but in Chelmsford and Kensington and Chelsea this position is reversed with positive opinions outnumbering negative ones by a 3 to 2 margin.

To assist comparison between range and quality results, we have calculated a mean score⁷ based on the results.

Graph 19: Mean scores on quality and range



Three factors of interest emerge here. In the first place, the scores are quite modest in range; almost all lie between +/-0.5, and there is a balance of opinion, rather than a consensus, on these issues in each of the authorities; those with a view in one direction are countered by those with views tending in the other direction. In terms of a national indicator, this suggests that scores may well be close together, which amplifies any concerns over the accuracy of methodology or data manipulation. The dispersal of results suggests that this “close to average” result is a mix of “fair” scores and a balance of extreme views which tends to weigh in favour of criticism rather than praise.

⁷ The mean score is calculated by applying a score of +2 to every “very good” result, +1 for every “good” result, -1 for every “poor” result and -2 for every “very poor” result. “Fair” results are given a score of zero (and are thus ignored), as are those answers where the result is missing. The score can range from +2 (indicating a strongly positive result) to -2 (a strongly negative result).

Secondly, we notice that range and quality tend in the same direction and to a similar degree. In none of the pilots is there a positive result for one and a negative result for the other. The two have an appearance of interdependence, at least to the extent that people who are critical of one factor will not give balancing credit for the other. In fact, very few individuals marked quality more than one step away from their range score. This suggests that the two terms are at least perceived as interchangeable and leads us to conclude that a different wording may be needed to clarify the difference between range and quality.

Thirdly, in most instances the score for range is better than that of quality – so that where there is a difference in perception on these factors, it is quality that people tend to mark down.

The range and quality questions were amplified by asking “Why do you say that?” after each one. The intention here was to garner some insight into what changes might be most productive in terms of improving the indicator score. In fact there was high degree of consensus across all authorities on both issues.

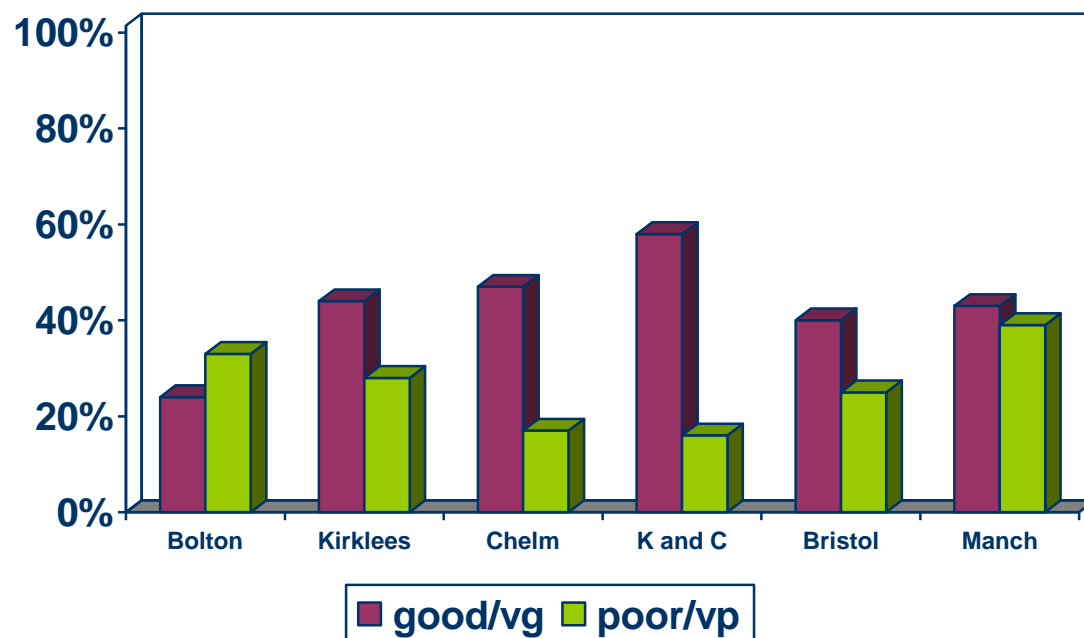
On range, the answers generally could be summarised as “I say that because it’s true” – in other words, people said that the reason they thought the range was poor was because the range was, in fact, poor. This suggests a lack of understanding or context which would help people rationalise their answer, and offers very little in terms of priorities for improvement.

On quality, the answers were a little more enlightening, and focussed around a few core issues. Maintenance and cleanliness were mentioned quite frequently, and are clearly part of people’s understanding of quality; also mentioned frequently were questions of safety (in respect of the equipment), community safety (fear of using the space) and vandalism. Quality is thus to do with the functionality and usability of the site and any provision at the site, rather than the play experience as such.

3.3 Indicator results – schools survey

Graph 20 shows children’s perceptions of range and quality:

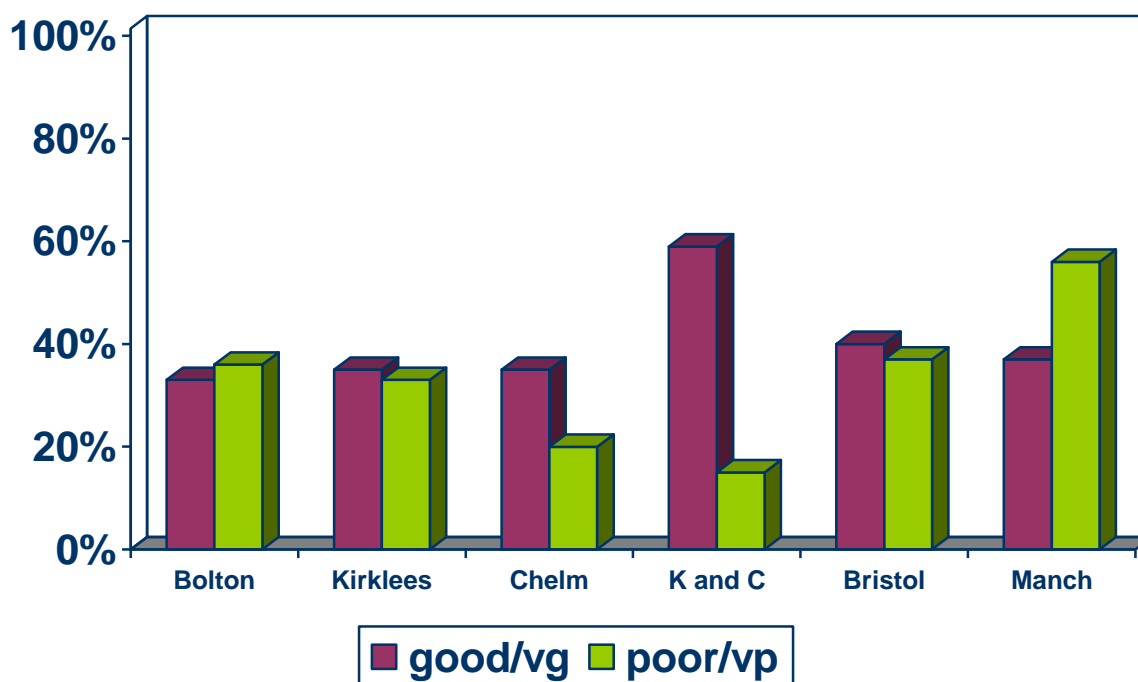
Graph 20: children’s perceptions of range of play opportunities



In Kirklees, Chelmsford, Bristol, Manchester, and Kensington and Chelsea the results are balanced towards a positive view of range, and this is particularly the case in Chelmsford and Kensington and Chelsea where positives outweigh negatives by some distance. Bolton stands in contrast to this with a slight balance towards a negative view of range.

The results for quality are shown in **Graph 21** below:

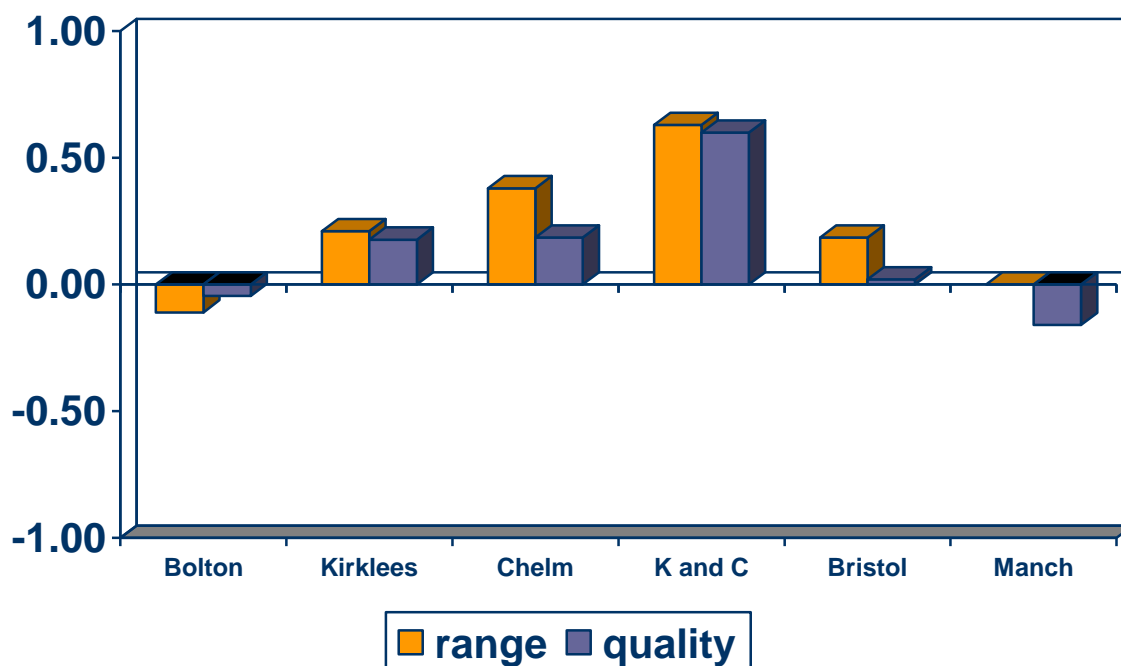
Graph 21: children’s perceptions of quality of play opportunities



As on range, so on quality. In Kirklees, the balance is more even, but in Bolton the negatives prevail, whilst in Kensington and Chelsea and Chelmsford views are strongly in favour of the positive – especially in Kensington and Chelsea. In Manchester, however, things are different, and negatives outweigh positives on quality, in contrast to an overall positive view on range.

As with the household survey, we have converted these results into a mean score⁸ and compared the results for range and quality with one another:

⁸ The mean score is calculated by applying a score of +2 to every “very good” result, +1 for every “good” result, -1 for every “poor” result and -2 for every “very poor” result. “Fair” results are given a score of zero (and are thus ignored), as are those answers where the result is missing. The score can range from +2 (indicating a strongly positive result) to -2 (a strongly negative result).

Graph 22: Mean scores on quality and range

The results here are quite similar, and raise similar highlights, as those for parents. We are again struck by the modest range of the scores (apart from that of Kensington and Chelsea, which is an exceptionally strong result), but unlike the household survey this appears to be based more on consensus than averaging of extremes.

Again range and quality are tending in the same direction and to a similar extent (less so in Manchester), suggesting that the two factors do not operate independently of one another. And, again as in the household survey, the score for range is more pronounced than that for quality, so children are also more critical of quality than they are of range – reflecting perhaps that perceptions of quality are more readily formed than perceptions of range.

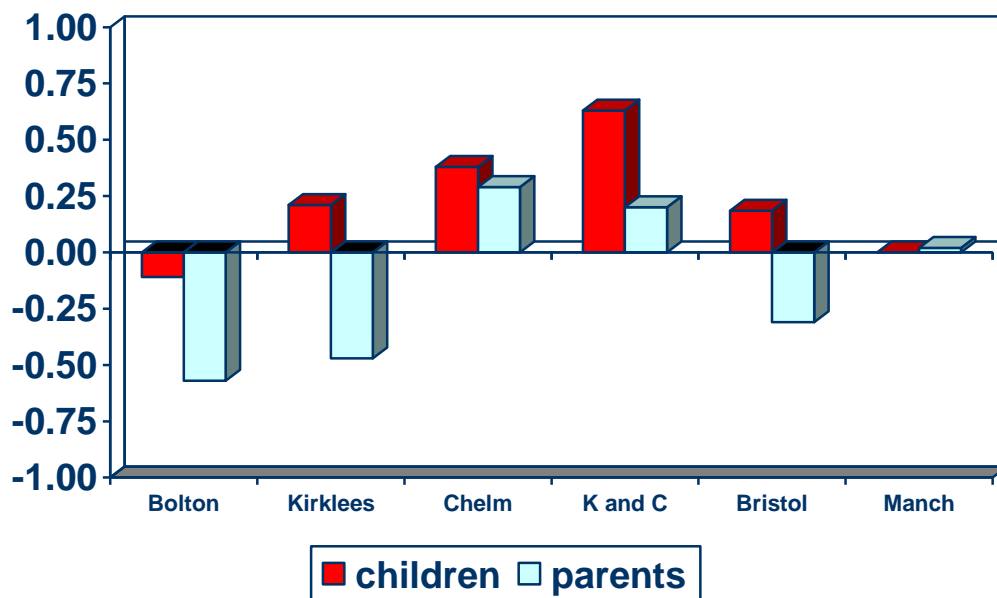
The range and quality questions were followed by exploratory, open ended questions asking why children saw things that way. What is striking about these results is a high level of non-response, indicating great difficulty in formulating a reason for the

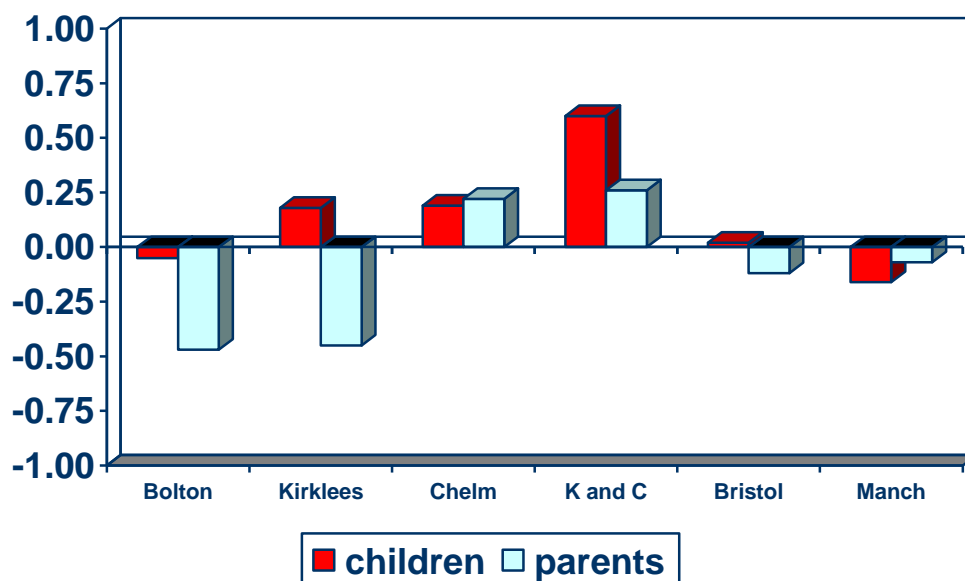
assessment being given. It is also striking that the reasons given for one score are in many cases justification for the other score – in other words, children’s reasons for scoring range in a particular way have to do with quality, and (to a lesser extent) vice versa. The value of these comments in an open-ended question is quite low as a guide to future improvement; comments on quality, where provided and valid, tend to focus on safety, community safety, and vandalism, as with the parents.

So how do children and parents compare in their appraisals of range and quality?

Graph 23 and Graph 24 below sets the parents’ and children’s mean scores in juxtaposition:

Graph 23: Parents/carers and children’s mean scores for range



Graph 24: Parents/carers and children's mean scores for quality

The first point to note here is that children are on the whole much less critical of either range or quality than their parents. With the slight exception of quality in Chelmsford, children give generally better scores to both range and quality than parents do. In some cases the difference is quite striking; Kirklees and Bristol children actually take a positive view of both range and quality, in contrast to a reasonably significant negative view from the parents surveyed here. In Bolton and Kensington and Chelsea, too, the difference between the views of children and adults is quite pronounced.

This then opens up the difficult question of whose view is the more reliable. We suggest that the answer to this does not lie so much in the credibility of the respondent as in the basis for their perception. We suspect that children will be more accepting of a limited range of provision because they may have little experience of wider provision, or awareness of what else might be offered, whilst adults will be more familiar with what they have seen elsewhere and wish they had locally. On quality, adults will also be more aware of risk and more concerned for the

safety of children than children themselves may be, and since safety appears to be the main factor in determining a quality score this emerges as a differentiator between the views of adults and children.

3.4 Feedback from pilots

The satisfaction PIs questions were asked in both the household survey and the schools survey. To avoid repetition, feedback about the schools survey method is reported here, whilst feedback about the household survey method is reported in the participation indicator chapter. However, feedback on both surveys' results regarding the satisfaction indicators is reported in this section.

3.4.1 Schools survey evaluation

There appears to be no relationship between the distribution method and response rates. Bolton, Bristol and Manchester used online surveying, with Bolton securing a high number of responses but Bristol and Manchester a low number. Kensington and Chelsea used a mix of online and paper questionnaires and achieved a high number of responses. Chelmsford and Kirklees conducted paper surveys, with Chelmsford obtaining a low response and Kirklees a high response.

However, previous relationships with schools did seem to have an effect on response rates. Bolton's department had good relationships with the schools - 'pushing on open doors'.

Bristol and Chelmsford had weak relationships with schools. Also, at Chelmsford, questions were added to a paper survey being undertaken by Sports Development in all 29 schools but Chelmsford did not control the process - many questionnaires were not completed in the classroom, as they should have been, but were sent home.

The online survey was easy to set up at Bolton and Bristol - schools have their own network and the primary schools had no problems with IT. At Manchester, there were no problems with firewalls. There were some technical problems but these were easily resolved. An online survey is very convenient because the schools can choose to do it at any time. Other online consultations have previously been

undertaken in Manchester's schools. Shortage of computers was not a problem in the primary schools because they ran the survey in two 'sittings'.

However, in Chelmsford it was not practicable to undertake a web-based survey, especially in primary schools. Schools were not interested because of the limited time available to use the Internet. Most only have a small IT suite. In many cases computers with broad band access are in the staff room, so children have to be accompanied. At Kirklees, many schools have software which stops pupils getting onto web sites. Kirklees have tried to do online work with schools in the last 2 years and there have been technical difficulties. If schools regularly did things online this would be more efficient and would save paper. It is felt that the children like the technology.

At Bristol it proved very difficult to secure agreements with schools to participate in spite of great efforts. The main reason for this was felt to be the lack of a good relationship with heads, which would need to be built up over time. Manchester also suffered from poor contacts with individual teachers, although the initial contacts with schools were reasonable.

3.4.2 Reliability of results

Kirklees worried that children did not understand the word 'range' - they probably related the question to a space they knew. Manchester also worried that children could be less experienced to judge 'range' than adults - children may have only ever been to their local park so may have nothing to compare it with. Bristol suggest that if household respondents only used one site, they probably were reporting on the range on that particular site rather than the local area as a whole. However, at Manchester, the household survey additional comments on range referred to the opportunities in an area, rather than opportunities at one site.

Bolton consider that household respondents did not differentiate between range and quality very well. The wording of the questions as they stand is not helpful. It would be better to ask about the number of accessible play spaces in order to find perceptions of range. At Bristol and Manchester, it is felt that there was some cross over between range and quality responses.

Some authorities feel that the two surveys gave different, non-comparable results on satisfaction because parents and children have different conceptions of range and quality. Bolton feel that parents are more concerned about safety, children want fun and value the experience; parents think about fixed play and safety, children think about wider play spaces. Bolton are more interested in the views of children. Kirklees also values the children's views rather than parents, so they consider that the schools survey probably gives a more accurate picture. At Bristol and Kirklees, the children were much more positive about range and quality than the parents. At Bristol, only primary children were surveyed in the schools survey, which may explain part of the discrepancy. Their household survey results are more consistent with the results of previous consultations with users. At Chelmsford, the household results also matched similar comments from other surveys. The Chelmsford satisfaction results from children were consistent with the household survey, but for those questionnaires completed at home there is a danger that the responses are as much from parents as children.

At Kensington and Chelsea, the good quality and range responses match other evidence, e.g. very high parent satisfaction with play centres, high Youth Service satisfaction, JAR (outstanding), and a well resourced and well rated authority generally.

At Bristol, ethnic minority household respondents gave higher scores on range and quality. This is felt to be possibly due to lower expectations.

3.4.3 Improvements

Bolton added questions which were the same as those in the Tellus Survey i.e. on bullying, health and relationships. They think that adding the extra questions is necessary; just the play questions would not have filled up the time of the lesson.

Manchester, Bolton, Kirklees and Kensington and Chelsea recommend clearer, more child-friendly wording in the school survey, particularly for the range and quality questions. Kensington and Chelsea and Kirklees suggest that the range and quality questions might work better if they specified what children should think about in giving the answers - and maybe give tick boxes for specific elements - i.e. developing the ideas of 'range' and 'quality' and enabling more meaningful

responses to be achieved. Bolton and Kirklees recommend two different versions for different age bands - Kirklees feel that the word 'play' could put off secondary school children from responding. Bolton feel that the questionnaire looked bland on the screen, whilst Kirklees recommend, and in fact used, a more attractive design for the questionnaire.

Bolton feels that it was possible to skip questions; age and gender are missing on some responses - it needed compulsory questions which had to be answered before logging out.

Bolton, Kirklees and Kensington and Chelsea think that more time is needed to set up the school survey, particularly to secure schools' cooperation and participation - Kensington and Chelsea suggest nine months.

Manchester, Chelmsford and Kirklees recommend other methods, rather than the self-completion survey. A head teacher in Manchester thinks that it would be better to run the session as a focus group - explain one question in a group and get the answers and then move on to the next question. Chelmsford thinks it would be more effective to undertake a hand count of responses to questions, in each class, during 15 minute sessions. It would then be possible to cover the rising fives. Kirklees think that methods of achieving results should be more interpersonal, interactive and imaginative. Kirklees would capture "soft" data on attitudes through focus groups. They would vary methods according to age group - for younger children they would use pictures. They would use different methods for special school children.

Bristol and Kirklees feel that the children's satisfaction question could be linked with a children's assessment of the quality of play spaces, to complement the pilot's quality tool.

Better briefing is needed for research partners on how to distribute paper questionnaires - i.e. do not give to children to take home (as at Chelmsford) but post to children's addresses (as at Kensington and Chelsea).

3.4.4 Usefulness of satisfaction indicators information

Bolton would be interested in the correlations between the satisfaction with quality responses and participation; and between the satisfaction and quality responses and

provision improvements. They would like to use the school survey results as a baseline for benchmarking by looking at changes which result from improvements from investing in facilities. They could then use the results to lever in more funding. Bolton felt it was very good value for money, which would only increase with repetition.

Chelmsford will use the school survey results in their Play Strategy, but they are unlikely to influence play provision because the survey process didn't work well and their response was low.

Kensington and Chelsea will use the satisfaction indicators information for their Big Lottery application and their Play Strategy. They would like to analyse the data by postcode, but there are some large postcode areas, reducing the usefulness.

Manchester was pleased with the positive results from the household survey. There has been an improvement programme for play areas over the last 8 years but the perception that many staff have is that no-one wants to use the parks because they are not clean and not safe. This is partly because of complaints received and partly because staff tend not to visit the parks at busy times. The survey provides useful information that perceptions are changing. The survey results on range and quality will be used for Section 106 allocations. Manchester have had no data to date to guide this and decisions have been made for political reasons and have sometimes been terrible decisions- e.g. political decisions to provide facilities where there is no proven need. The pilot results could be broken down by area to see where need is greatest.

For Kirklees the household results are thought provoking and could be compared with data gained by the planning department (on the PPG17 survey). It leaves Kirklees with a series of questions and in fact more questions than answers. The headline results of both household and schools surveys will be used in the play strategy but not the detail. The satisfaction indicators' scores do not give many management leads - they need further qualitative research. Nevertheless, Kirklees feel that the schools survey has opened up new conversations, avenues and priorities; it is another way of getting young people involved; it possibly opens the minds of head teachers; so it is a useful step in a bigger process. They cite one

positive outcome - the head of a primary school, whose children reported they had nowhere to play, agreed to open up the playground out of hours. Play fits well with extended school offers. The school survey therefore provides useful triggers and is useful in encouraging joined up thinking.

3.4.5 Costs of schools survey

The resource cost of the schools survey varies widely between the pilots, from 1-2 days to 3-4 weeks, with or without direct costs for data entry and/or analysis. This variation is not simply related to the number of cooperating schools, the scale of the response, or the method of survey implementation.

- Bolton = 1 person 2.5 weeks, a second person 2 days.
- Bristol = 1 person 5 days, a second person 7.5 hours.
- Chelmsford = 1 person 4 hours, another 4 hours, a third 3 hours, + £300 for data entry and printing.
- Kensington and Chelsea = 4 people, 1 month total, + part of £5,500 contractor's fee.
- Kirklees = 1 person 2 days, and nine people making school visits (which they would have done anyway); + part of £6,050 for both household and school surveys.
- Manchester = 1 person 5 days, a second person 2 hours.

3.5 Issues arising

The variables for range and quality are not well recognised and are in fact treated largely interchangeably, arguing that they are neither well understood nor to be sensibly distinguished. In addition, the clarification sought through the open ended “Why” question has not been forthcoming, and expectations seem to be influencing judgment as well. We think there may be more to be gained by asking a short series of questions about range before asking the killer question (thus helping to clarify what factors influence perception of range, and also steering the respondent towards a better understanding of the term), and the same pattern could usefully be followed for quality.

- Online survey methodology offers a great deal more than paper-based, and was successful where it took place, but the capacity of different authorities and schools to handle this means that an alternative paper based approach must be available at least for the time being. However, we need to be clear in the guidance about how this is to be distributed.
- We take the view that the survey of parents, using the household survey, is not appropriate for this indicator, which is best assessed using the opinions of children. If the household survey were to be employed for this indicator, the observations and conclusions drawn about the household survey in section 2 of the report are also relevant here and should be noted.
- Where it works, the schools survey is an effective mechanism for the inclusion of children in an issue that concerns them greatly, and this inclusion dimension carries heavy weight for us; we are not sure that we should accept parents' opinions as a proxy for those most directly affected by the range and quality of local provision.
- We do not accept that qualitative approaches such as focus groups are a sufficiently sound and statistically robust basis for a performance indicator.
- We nevertheless have serious concerns about the viability of a survey that seems to depend so heavily on the inconstant and inconsistent relationship between the authority and its local schools. It seems to us that even those authorities with good schools relationships are more likely to depend on their more friendly schools to secure this kind of data, whilst several authorities – at district but also at first-tier level - seem likely to struggle to achieve even a modest sampling requirement.
- The selection of schools has a significant impact on the sample structure, particularly as regards ethnicity, but it may not be possible to provide specific guidance on how to select schools because the number of schools varies widely between authorities, making it impossible to specify numbers of schools or even proportions of schools that should take part. Whilst it may be good practice, and highly important to performance, to secure schools' participation, we must

question the comparability of these results between local authorities when they are so dependent on local idiosyncrasies.

- The schools survey has thrown up some additional issues that need to be factored in to any subsequent guidance. The desirability of an online mechanism for secondary schools is important, and also eases both logistics and data collection/analysis considerably. It may also improve acceptability of the lesson-plan argument for participation. However, there needs to be clearer guidance on security issues and on survey hosting to enable authorities that are less familiar with this type of approach to tackle it confidently.
- The timetabling of a schools survey needs to incorporate additional time for establishing or exploiting the relationships with schools, and for the technical dimensions of security and hosting.
- We warm to the idea of using a child-friendly approach, in language and in format, for the schools survey. This seems entirely appropriate; however, we point out that what appeals to a young child may look very immature to an older child respondent, and may discourage honest response. We therefore think that guidance should encourage child-friendliness but within the bounds of age-sensitivity.
- In our view the schools survey achieves far more in terms of inclusion, and in demonstrating a commitment to consulting children, than any other approach. For the satisfaction indicators, we think this is a valid approach that can achieve the desired outcome of comparable, viable and robust data, provided (and this is a very large proviso) that the basic infrastructure of schools relations allows this to a sufficiently uniform and robust degree.

4. Quality Indicator

4.1 Definition

The quality indicator sought to measure the proportion of facilities and spaces achieving the top two ratings in the quality criteria scoring:

The proportion of facilities and spaces meeting the quality criteria for “excellent” and “good” ratings

The assessment was to be undertaken using a standard assessment sheet with defined criteria. Scores ranged from 1 to 5. There were three broad sections covering location, play value, and care and maintenance, and total scores could be derived for each section as well as an overall score. The pilot sought to establish whether the Quality Tool could provide a fair assessment of the quality of spaces in which children play.

4.2 Introduction

There is growing concern about the facilities available for children to play. The Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell, in announcing the start of the DCMS sponsored Children’s Play Review in 2002, stated that

“...we must look to reclaim for children and young people a part of their childhood that is in real danger of being lost. Too many play facilities are run-down, in the wrong place, or simply too dull to keep children's interest...Young people want to play and spend time outside and it is important that we provide suitable spaces for them.”⁹

Given the opportunity children will play anywhere. Play opportunities can therefore be created in a wide range of settings, with or without facilities. The Quality Tool is concerned with open access designated areas for children that are not staffed and

⁹ Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2004) Getting Serious About Play: A review of children’s play

which contain a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play. It is also concerned with casual or informal playing space within housing areas.

A good place for play is dependent on a number of key elements. In their influential book on children's needs from the outdoor environment on housing estates, Wheway and Millward sought to establish the key factors in the design and management of good quality play spaces. Their research showed that location is perhaps the single most important factor in how well children use not only play areas but also open spaces. In general, children like to play locally where they can be seen, see others and meet others.

The quality of play provision requires an understanding of children's needs, designing and creating spaces that attract and engage children and young people, and ensuring appropriate long-term management and maintenance. Finally, children and young people, particularly those with any impairment, should find it easy to be able to get to and get around that provision. The Quality Tool seeks to capture these essential requirements for a successful play space and to provide an assessment of the extent to which a playing space meets those requirements.

4.3 Method

The Quality Tool¹⁰ assesses three major aspects of children's outdoor play spaces: the location of play spaces, the play value and the care and maintenance.

The quality assessment tool went through a number of revisions. All the local authorities agreed that the version used by the pilots was easy to use. Manchester used the version used by the other pilots for three sites and then a newer version developed after comments from a Network Day meeting and found the latest version (not used by the other pilots) more useful.

¹⁰ The Quality Tool was developed by Haki Kapasi to assess the quality of children's outdoor play spaces. A report on the working of the Quality Tool has been prepared separately. This section draws on the findings of that report.

4.3.1 Location

Location is perhaps the single most important factor in how well children use spaces for play. In general, children like to play locally where they can be seen, see others and meet others. Young people are able to roam further and can therefore use spaces further away from home, although they too like to feel safe wherever they are 'hanging out'.

Disabled children and parents/carers with buggies should be able to access the play areas as much as non-disabled children. Often children will play with younger siblings who may need to be taken to the area in a buggy or push chair.

The scoring is designed to identify the suitability of the location of play areas and spaces where children may play.

4.3.2 Play value

A good space for play will offer an appropriate and stimulating play environment. The assessment deliberately does not focus on fixed equipment but considers the different, innovative and challenging ways in which children can experience sensations such as rocking, swinging and sliding. A space should also be able to offer opportunities for disabled children, some of whose impairments mean they cannot for example, sit on traditional swings. The assessment of play value also considers the extent to which a space offers a variety of interesting ways in which children can access different types of play. Quiet, contemplative play is considered to be as important as boisterous and physical play.

Children also need to take risks to learn about and understand their own capabilities. Risk does not mean creating hazardous environments, but it does mean opportunities for challenging themselves are available through design.

4.3.3 Care and maintenance

The final section of the assessment examines the quality of care and maintenance of play spaces and areas.

4.3.4 Categories of Play Space

Separate assessment sheets were prepared for each of the three types of play space under consideration (see **Appendix 1** for details of the assessment sheets for Types A, B and C spaces). The different types of play space are described in **Table 6** below:

Table 6: Typology of Play Spaces

Type A: Door-step spaces and facilities

- small equipped play areas (furnished primarily for young children)
- neighbourhood amenity green spaces (unequipped)
- home zone or equivalent.

Type B: Neighbourhood spaces and facilities

- large equipped play areas (furnished primarily for children aged 5–11)
- satellite parks*
- junior bike, skate and skateboard facilities, kick-about areas.

Type C: Local spaces and facilities for play

Supervised

- adventure playgrounds
- open access play centres
- open access playschemes
- play ranger and outreach play projects.

No formal supervision

- school playgrounds (open out of school hours)
- neighbourhood equipped play areas (eight+ items)
- teenage wheeled sports area
- ball courts, multi-use games areas
- hangout/youth shelters
- community parks*
- local parks*
- playing fields and recreation grounds freely available for children to use.

The categorisation of spaces was also a requirement for the Access Indicator (see Chapter 5).

The criteria used in each assessment sheet reflected the differences in the size and function of each type. For example, Type B and C spaces included the provision of toilets whilst Type A did not. Type B and C also included the presence of trusted/supervisory adults, which Type A did not.

The process required that each space under consideration had to be categorized according to the typology.

There was some confusion amongst all the pilots about the definitions of the different types of space. Clarification was required following the second Network Day about spaces close to housing and the decision about whether the space is Type A, B or C. The advice given was that a number of factors need to be taken into consideration: the role and function of the space, the age range of the children for which it is intended to serve, its size and the number of pieces of equipment (if it is an equipped playing space). Whilst distance from housing is a factor that needs to be taken into consideration, particularly for a Type A space, it is not the determining factor. If a play space is close to housing, it will not necessarily be a Type A space - it could be a Type B or C space. Some pilots had been regarding proximity to housing as being the sole determining factor.

Certain Type C spaces gave rise to difficulties. For instance, a ball court on its own falls within the Type C definition and will necessarily score poorly because it has only one function. Other types of provision for older young children such as MUGAs also caused difficulties.

In addition to the issues about deciding on the type of space under consideration, there was also a lack of clarity as to what constituted a space for children to play. Identifying the assessment boundary was particularly difficult in large and medium sized parks where potentially the whole area could be assessed. Initially, there was some confusion about fencing and whether this defined the space to be assessed. In some cases this meant disregarding adjoining spaces that were clearly designed and used for play e.g. kick about areas. In general, the pilots used their own

judgement and were pragmatic about the physical space that they assessed; but they were not necessarily consistent in these judgements.

4.3.5 Assessment of supervised provision

None of the pilots carried out an assessment of their supervised provision even those that offered after school play provision. This is seen as an omission because supervised provision makes an important contribution to the basket of opportunities available for children to play out. However, such provision would need to pass the 'three frees' test in order to be included.

4.3.6 Consultation with children and young people

As part of general information required for the assessment, such as the time of the assessment, the weather and the name of the assessor, assessors were asked whether children and young people had been consulted in the development of the site. The response was not recorded in the final score.

4.3.7 Sampling

The advice provided in the Guidance Manual acknowledged that most pilots would not be in a position to assess all their sites at the same time each year, because resources would not allow this. If this were the case then it would be necessary to take a sample. Two forms of sample were allowed:

A straightforward proportion of each type of site, such as 25% of all sites in which case the sample should be:

- 1 Proportionate to each type of site (i.e. 25% of all type A sites, 25% of all type B sites, 25% of all type C sites)
- 2 Spread across the district, not concentrated in one particular locality or quarter of the area
- 3 Chosen at random from a list of all sites (the sites sampled should then be excluded from future years' sampling until all other sites have had their turn to be assessed.)

Alternatively, a minimum number of sites could be selected for assessment. This needed to be at least 40 sites and should have included at least 15 type A, 15 type B, and 10 type C sites chosen at random and distributed across the district.

In the event, some pilots decided to assess all their sites whilst others adopted the sampling approach. One interesting opportunity emerged as a result of discussions at the Inception Day sessions with the pilot authorities. The opportunity was identified by both Bolton and Kirklees to combine the survey of schools with the quality assessment. This opened up the possibility of being able to obtain the views of children about the quality of play spaces near where they lived and went to school; and to compare these results with the results obtained from using the Quality Tool. Whilst this was not a requirement in terms of the pilot process, the information obtained had the potential to inform management decisions in the future.

4.3.8 Scoring

The first step for those undertaking the assessment was to categorise the spaces under consideration. This may have already been done as part of the audit for the access indicator, and was necessary for two reasons:

1. It determined which assessment sheet was used at the play space.
2. It determined the composition of the sample.

Each space was then assessed against the criteria that applied to that particular type of space.

Timing

The Guidance Manual recommended that, if possible, assessments should be carried out during school holidays. In the event, this was not possible and most of the pilots carried them out during term time. Assessments during school holidays would have provided a valuable additional perspective about whether a site was popular with children or was unused. In addition, there might have been an opportunity to ask children and young people questions about the site and get their views and perspectives on its quality.

Scoring sites

Whilst guidance was available to each local authority for scoring, the way in which they carried out the quality assessments varied slightly. All the local authorities carried them out in teams of two or more people. Some local authorities asked each team member to score individually and then compare scores, whilst others discussed the site and gave one group score.

Whilst both methods were valid, it was more useful to obtain individual scores which provided more data for analysis and showed up any discrepancies or similarities between the scores. Individual scoring also provided first judgements, without the influence of others, which was valuable.

The consultants were able to provide some training during visits to the pilots and this helped to ensure all those participating understood the methodology, criteria and definitions and this helped to ensure greater consistency in the scoring.

Comparing scores at the end of each site visit was useful because it allowed for discussions about that site. Some team members changed their score once they had heard the opinions of others. Team members were also able to point out features another colleague may have missed.

The quality tool is most effective when the same people are conducting the assessments enabling consistency of scoring for all the sites. Whilst individual scores varied, there was consistency of scoring between individuals when the same people assessed the sites. For example, in one local authority, four people conducted the assessments: one person gave consistently lower scores on play value whilst another gave consistently lower scores on care and maintenance. It would therefore be a relatively straightforward procedure to weight the scores where these are consistently lower.

Subjectivity in the assessments

The Quality Tool is necessarily subjective. Whilst the scoring of the indicator is quantitative, the scoring is based on subjective views. This type of approach is accepted practice in research (and indeed in some CPA indicators). It is the only way in which an indicator can be presented in a manner which can be compared across sites, across local authorities, and across time.

Whilst the tool has been designed, as far as possible, to remove the potential for differences in interpretation, it was inevitable that differences in perception would be likely to influence the scoring. Nevertheless, given the nature of what was being assessed and the variety of dedicated play areas, it was inevitable that some differences would emerge during the process. Play spaces covered a wide range of different circumstances from one slide on a small patch of land at the back of a housing estate to large play sites with play features of all types and for all ages. Individuals' perceptions or notions of play, danger, challenge, risk and safety were different - for example, brooks could be viewed as either dangerous or a wonderful play opportunity.

The approach to trying to achieve consistency in scoring was for two people at least to assess each site and to then compare and discuss the scores. The discussions helped to moderate the scoring and helped each team member view the site from different perspectives. Some assessors referred strictly to the guidance to guide their scoring and this helped to limit the differences in interpretation.

Analysis of the scores showed that it was usually just one team member who would score differently to the others and that in fact the scores were broadly similar. At one site, it was the consultant who gave consistently low scores compared to the other team members whilst at another site all the team members, including the consultant, gave very similar scores.

Despite the possibility of divergent scoring, it was felt by those who participated that the scores did reflect the quality of each site which suggests that the tool performed reasonably well.

Moderation and peer assessment

The consultants to the project visited the pilot local authorities and conducted sample site assessments with the assessment teams. This provided a useful 'outsider' perspective. The consultants were able to question certain assumptions being made by the site assessment teams. An independent assessor who has no or very little knowledge of the area and who is knowledgeable about children's play can offer a valuable perspective to the whole process.

Kirklees and Bolton conducted assessments of a sample of the other pilot's sites which provided some interesting comparisons. Peer assessments can help to moderate scores and offer a different perspective which can lead to more confidence in ensuring that the assessments are carried out with rigour.

The table below shows the scores between Kirklees and Bolton. Whilst Kirklees gave Bolton higher scores than Bolton did for itself, with the exception of Queens Park the difference between the scores varied by between 2% and 14%. A very different perspective is gained from looking at the separate sub totals for location, play and care and maintenance (C&M), where there are some large divergencies.

Table 7: Scores between Kirklees and Bolton.

Site	Pilot	Class ABC	Location	Play	C&M	Quality score
Queens Park	Bolton Kirklees.	C	23	21	13	39%
		C	25	30	25	67%
Barlow Park	Bolton Kirklees.	B	21	23	19	57%
		C	24	32	24	67%
M.B.P.	Bolton Kirklees.	C	25	26	25	64%
		C	27	36	31	78%
St. Leonards Close	Bolton Kirklees.	A	12	12	13	39%
		B	13	16	12	37%
Little Holme Park	Bolton Kirklees.	B	22	19	14	51%
		B	26	21	17	60%
Gt Lever Park	Bolton Kirklees.	B	31	25	19	70%
		C	28	32	20	68%
Haslam Park	Bolton Kirklees.	C	17	18	17	44%
		C	18	22	19	49%
Broadgreen Gardens	Bolton Kirklees.	A	26	16	12	59%
		A	25	23	12	64%
Hulme Rd	Bolton Kirklees.	B	20	10	6	35%
		B	20	19	9	45%
Dymchurch	Bolton Kirklees.	A	25	7	10	47%
		A	26	8	11	50%

Source: Quality Assessment Tool, Draft Report May 2007, Haki Kapasi.

Certain differences between the two teams of assessors can be identified. In the first place, there was a disagreement on three areas regarding classification, (Barlow, St Leonards, Gt Lever). Secondly, out of the thirty scores across Location/Play/C&M all but three (2 on location, 1 on C&M) were scored higher by Kirklees and 2 showed the same score (1 on location, 1 on C&M). Finally Kirklees scored the play value of all the locations higher by an average of 6.2 points per area. The Kirklees and Bolton comparative experience demonstrates the potential for divergent scoring, despite common guidance. This reinforces the feeling that the quality indicator is less reliable for inter-authority comparisons than for intra-authority comparisons

Local knowledge

Local knowledge can be useful during the assessments, particularly in relation to the amount of usage of the play space, the age of the equipment, how regularly the play area was inspected, what health and safety procedures were in place, the types of people that used the site and other issues in the usage of the play area. It is very difficult to assess whether a site is well used or not without some local knowledge. Reliance has to be placed on the amount of wear and tear found on the equipment or from children/parents using the site. However, usage can be difficult to measure if a play space is new or recently refurbished as there may be no indication of wear.

4.3.9 Interperation of definitions

Definition of “trusted adults”

There was some confusion about the meaning of “trusted adults”. Although the guidance gave examples of “trusted adults” such park keepers, street wardens and play rangers, a number of pilots considered parents and grandparents as trusted adults. The intention in the assessment tool is to score the number of regular, paid staff who are available when children and young people need them and who, through their presence, are able to create a sense of safety for children and young people. Often their presence encourages parents and carers to allow their children to go out and play without accompanying them. Following a suggestion from one of the pilots, the term was changed to the presence of “supervisory adults”.

Seating for children

Whilst this criterion suggested that seating was available specifically for children, in reality all types of seating, even those for adults, were deemed as suitable for children.

4.3.10 Weighting

One approach to arriving at an overall score in terms of quality would have been to simply add up the raw scores for each of the three attributes (location, play value, care/maintenance) and arrive at a total score. However, the maximum scores for the different attributes are different – location can secure a maximum raw score (in Type C) of 35, but play value can achieve 40 and care/maintenance a total of 35. Of the three attributes, location is recognised as being the most important and it was decided that additional weight needed to be given to this set of scores.

The approach was therefore to weight location by 2, with play value weighted at 1.5 and care/maintenance weighted at 1.57. This balances the scorecard at a maximum score of 70 for location, 60 for play value, and 55 for care/maintenance. This means a total maximum score of 185, to which all three principal dimensions are contributing at similar levels, with location given a margin of importance. The calculator provided to the pilots was based on this approach.

The score is meaningless without some understanding of the maximum that can be achieved, so scores were expressed as a percentage rather than a number. The percentage is the site score as a percentage of the maximum possible score for that site.

It would be possible to calculate an overall score for each authority by taking the total scores for all sites in the sample, expressed as a percentage of the maximum possible scores for those sites.

4.4. Results

Scores for the sites ranged between 22% and 100% for Type A sites. Given this range, five classifications were developed for the purpose of the pilot,. The five classifications are shown in **Table 8** below:

Table 8: Classification of Quality Scores

Score	Classification
20-35%	V. Poor
36-50%	Poor
51-65%	Fair
66-80%	Good
81-100%	Excellent

Source: Quality Assessment Tool, Draft Report May 2007, Haki Kapasi.

Table 9 below provides a breakdown of the classification of scores achieved for each type of space. The results of the assessments are shown as percentages, which are classified as very poor, poor, fair, good or excellent.

These results show a degree of dissimilarity between the pilots in their scoring. The Type A results show that Bolton assessed 97% of their Type A sites as being less than ‘Good’ compared to Chelmsford who assessed all their Type A sites as being ‘Excellent’. The results for Type B sites show a spread of results across all the classifications with a tendency for scores to be grouped in the middle range. However, Chelmsford is again the exception with scores being skewed towards ‘Excellent’. The results for Type C spaces also show a spread of results across all classifications in all the pilots apart from Bolton where the bias is towards lower scores with 83% of the sites being classified as being ‘Very Poor’.

Table 9: Breakdown of Assessment Scores

Type A	Bolton	Manchester	Bristol	Chelmsford	Kirklees	RBKC ¹¹
	%	%	%	%	%	%
V Poor	26	0	4	0	3	9
Poor	45	0	6	0	3	53
Fair	26	50	20	0	19	20
Good	3	50	42	0	59	16
Excellent	0	0	28	100	16	2
Type B	Bolton	Manchester	Bristol	Chelmsford	Kirklees	RBKC
	%	%	%	%	%	%
V Poor	21	0	0	0	0	5
Poor	36	0	0	11	4	9
Fair	24	33	35	14	11	45
Good	16	56	48	0	76	27
Excellent	3	11	17	75	9	14
Type C	Bolton	Manchester	Bristol	Chelmsford	Kirklees	RBKC
	%	%	%	%	%	%
V Poor	83	0	0	0	6	0
Poor	0	0	12	17	19	15
Fair	17	25	31	66	0	15
Good	0	67	42	14	62	39
Excellent	0	8	15	3	13	31

Source: Quality Assessment Tool, Draft Report May 2007, Haki Kapasi.

¹¹ Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

The number of sites surveyed is shown in **Table 10** below. Five of the pilots assessed 80 or more sites in total. This was far more than would have been required if a sample had been taken. The only pilot to follow the sampling guidelines was Manchester. This means that the piloting of the Quality Tool provided a far more rigorous test of its capabilities than had been anticipated at the start of the process.

Table 10: Number of Sites Surveyed

	Bolton	Manchester	Bristol	Chelmsford	Kirklees	RBKC
Type A: Total number of sites	66	4	50	15	37	45
Type B Total number of sites	38	9	23	36	47	22
Type C: Total number of sites	6	12	26	29	16	13
Total number of sites assessed	110	25	99	80	100	80

Source: Quality Assessment Tool, Draft Report May 2007, Haki Kapasi.

The aim of the quality indicator is to demonstrate the proportion of a local authority's play provision that meets a quality standard. One of the purposes of the indicator is to facilitate comparison. Making comparisons between similar local authorities could provide an indication of how well a local authority is performing. However, in the case of the pilot authorities, there are significant differences between them in terms of population, settlement type, housing density etc. Care therefore needs to be taken in making comparisons.

Looking at all the sites (Types A,B and C) in each pilot, the proportion of facilities and spaces meeting the quality criteria for “excellent” and “good” ratings are shown in **Table 11** below:

Table 11: Quality Indicator results for all sites.

Classification	Bolton	Manchester	Bristol	Chelmsford	Kirklees	RBKC
Good	7	60	43	10	68	23
Excellent	1	8	22	60	12	10
Total	8	68	65	70	80	33

Source: Quality Assessment Tool, Draft Report May 2007, Haki Kapasi.

There is some consistency between the results for Manchester, Bristol, Chelmsford and Kirklees. The results for Bolton reflect an overall tendency to score sites at the lower end of the classification and to a lesser extent this appears to also be true of Kensington and Chelsea.

4.5 Feedback from pilots

4.5.1 Method

There was a mixed approach to the quality assessment. Some assessed or sampled all sites, but Bolton (B & C categories) and Bristol (fixed play) assessed certain types of site. These variations lead to problems in comparing average scores across authorities. In addition, most pilots used 3 -5 assessors, but Kensington and Chelsea used considerably more assessors (24), which raises concerns about consistency of assessment.

4.5.2 Problems and evaluation

Bolton felt that there was inconsistency in ABC classification and quality scoring across local authorities. This fear is derived from a visit from Kirklees play staff to assess a number of Bolton sites and compare classifications and scores.

It was difficult for Kirklees to categorise the sites into A, B and C. B and C sites can be very similar. Kirklees assessed the whole area, not just the play space - in

contrast to Bolton who just looked at the play space. There is sometimes conflict between the number of facilities on site and the locality of use - e.g. a space with lots of facilities (suggests a C) but only local use (suggests a B).

At Manchester, the definition of what should be included is a problem because they separate playgrounds into 3 types - under 5, ages 6 to 12, and aged 13+ - for good reasons. They feel that the tool ignores the overall play value of the whole park. It is not clear which spaces should be included in the different categories. Manchester scored areas separately when they were formally separated (e.g. by a path); but scored areas together when they were only informally separated.

For Bristol the quality assessments raise interesting concepts - e.g. enticing for children to play; access to natural environment; added play value - which concentrate on positive aspects of play value. This compares favourably with Bristol's previous system which was designed to identify reasons to remove equipment. The tool is a compromise between asset management, important for asset managers, and play value, important for children. At Kirklees too, the tool led to more discussion of play value rather than the state of equipment and maintenance.

Kensington and Chelsea think that it was difficult in assessing a wide range of spaces to have criteria that applied to them all. Scoring of individual spaces can be undermined. There is not enough range on the scoring for Kirklees - scoring needs to be balanced out - for example, it is relatively easy to pick up 5 points from having a seat, but for broken equipment you lose just 5 points.

Bristol think there were two key omissions from the assessment: the condition of the equipment (and its life expectancy) and the state of adjacent properties. They also feel it can be difficult to establish whether a site is well used – it is necessary to either use local knowledge or be experienced in identifying tell-tale signs of wear. The section on disabled/ physical mobility was not easy to use and the categories used here were not necessarily the best measures - more easily measurable data for this would include the width of the gate, surface of paths, and whether access was level. The criterion 'supervisory presence' is open to interpretation – Manchester

interpreted it as 'paid and specific to site' so none of their sites scored on this. Other pilot authorities may have interpreted it differently.

Chelmsford think that it is only possible to make a full assessment if you have local knowledge. Kensington and Chelsea think that local knowledge is required for the questions on involvement of children and on safety/security checks. Kirklees feel that the criterion 'well used' required local knowledge – this was easier if there were kids on the site.

Usefulness of quality indicator

There was common agreement among the pilots that, despite the problems above, the quality indicator was useful for internal comparisons, planning and management. In fact it was commonly selected as one of the most useful of the four indicators piloted. However there was also agreement (Bolton, Chelmsford, Kirklees) that the indicator was not suitable for comparisons across authorities - it was too subjective and would not compare like with like.

For Bolton, the quality assessment produced measures which were consistent with previous measurements. It could be used to rate developer proposals. Individual criterion scores are more useful than overall scores, because they are better for making management decisions. The play value assessment is important - it gets managers to look at assessment in a slightly different way. It put things into context and could give priorities for refurbishment. Bolton is likely to move forward to looking at the components of play value and care and maintenance in the refurbishment and maintenance programme.

Bristol think it is a reasonable assessment - but very subjective and could be improved. It needs to be more objective and quantifiable. It will be used as part of re-evaluation of playgrounds, with additional criteria.

Chelmsford think that it provides a fair assessment. They would look at comparing scores over time and whether improvements have been achieved. It is a good basis for decision making. Chelmsford has started to use the information in deciding on the renewal of play equipment/areas.

Kensington and Chelsea will use the information for planning negotiations on Section 106. The planners did not have the resources to do quality assessments (as part of PPG17) so the pilot quality assessment has been a bonus, plugging a gap between the Planning audit and the quality assessment of parks. It is a good example of different departments sharing evidence. Poor quality is a good reason for planning improvement in provision. Kensington and Chelsea waited for the quality evidence and it has influenced their Big Lottery bid. Kensington and Chelsea haven't yet overlaid quality assessments on maps of provision - this will be a useful combination. They want to undertake a rolling programme of updates to the quality assessments.

Kirklees feel that quality can only be assessed against local standards and pressures. The results of the current assessment will, to some extent, guide resource allocation.

Overall Manchester think that the quality tool is good – it just needs minor improvements. It gives them a more objective assessment of each site than would otherwise be the case. The quality assessment allows Manchester to drive improvements. They can find the worst A, B and C sites and work to improve them. It will be useful managerially. They previously used ROSPA but it is too health and safety orientated, with too many detailed criteria. The pilot's quality assessment is 'a blessing' – simpler and practical.

Therefore, it is an indicator which is better for planning and management decision-making than for inter-authority comparisons and benchmarking. For consistency across authorities, it would need either a huge training programme for assessors or a national team of assessors, neither of which is really practicable.

4.5.3 Improvement/guidance

Bolton and Kirklees suggest the need for greater clarity in the guidance, with more explanations of the types of sites, use of a flowGraph for the criteria used to classify into ABC, and a DVD could be useful giving examples of types of sites and scoring.

Bolton, Bristol and Kirklees suggest that it would be good to involve young people in the quality assessments. A team of mentors would also be useful.

Bristol suggest that research should be done to establish the play value of different aspects of a playground, to inform the quality assessment tool. For Manchester, the quality tool should be more flexible and playgrounds should not be down-scored for the lack of equipment in them for children of all ages.

Chelmsford, Kirklees and Manchester would like better guidance on what is being assessed - individual sites or groups of spaces - for example, a location might have an equipped play area next to a MUGA and a toddlers' play space. The results for the individual elements will be less than if they are assessed as a group. A holistic approach should be adopted so that the play value of the wider area is incorporated – “need clarity of scope of assessments geographically and conceptually”. This is important for ABC classification and for quality assessment. Chelmsford suggest that the guidance and assessment also needs to be sensitive to what a space is for - for example, sometimes a grass area without markings is better as a multi-games space but because it has no facilities, it will score low - but is a very important play space. Bristol suggest that ball games should be an associated feature and not actually part of the equipped playground criteria, because this can lead to a serious conflict.

Kensington and Chelsea think that play features need separate subsections, so they are assessed separately. Bristol suggest new sections on the condition of equipment and the life expectancy of equipment – this would make it a more useful management tool. Kensington and Chelsea also recommend assessment of equipment. Bristol suggest an additional section on encouraging adults in larger playgrounds- e.g. seats, notices, café, stuff for adults to play with children. Kirklees suggest that 'seats' should be more broadly defined as seats or other elements which can be used for sitting on. Bristol recommend an 'other' criterion - they cited the example of a high scoring site due for removal because of problems with gangs of teenagers and exclusion zones.

Chelmsford recommend that the weighting of play against ancillary items, e.g. bins and toilets, needs further consideration - if a toilet is provided it will result in a good score; however, the equipment could still be poor. Kirklees also recommend weighting of criteria in scoring, because they are not of equal value.

Kensington and Chelsea recommend spring or summer as a better time of year to undertake the assessments because usage would be more evident.

Some pilots raised the issue of involving children in the assessment process.

Kensington and Chelsea proposed using young people to carry out assessments of a few sites to 'spot check' the scores given by adults. It was felt that the assessment tool would be greatly enhanced if children and young people were involved in the assessments. It has been suggested that comparing adult and children and young people's scores would provide an additional dimension to the assessment.

In the first version of the assessment tool, negative scores were given if there were any hazards nearby the dedicated play area, for example canals and major roads. This was not included in subsequent versions. One pilot felt this category should be included because it would help when planning for future play areas. Often local authority officers were under political pressure to develop play areas even in unsuitable sites near hazards. This category would support them to identify unsuitable places for children's dedicated play areas

Costs

Manchester has the lowest resource costs for the quality assessment; but they undertook less than half the assessments of the other pilots. Kensington and Chelsea committed most resources to this assessment, mainly because of their large team of assessors. The other pilots committed about two or three weeks of manpower to the quality assessment.

Bolton = 1 person 6 days; others 8.5 days.

Bristol = 1 person 3 days; 3 others 6 days total.

Chelmsford = 2 people 37 hours; 1 person 12 hours, plus 6 hours training for four.

Kensington and Chelsea = 5 days admin, 24 people x 2 days each + part of £5,500 (rest for access PI) + £300

Kirklees = 3 people x 1 week; 2 days admin

Manchester = 1 person 2 days; second person 1 day; others 4 days.

4.6 Issues Arising

Measuring quality consists of quantifying the current level of performance according to expectations or standards of quality. Quality cannot be measured without a clear definition or standard. The indicator seeks to measure the proportion of facilities and spaces meeting the quality criteria for “excellent” and “good” ratings. Those who are responsible for undertaking the assessments must therefore have a clear understanding of what is meant by these terms. Without this definition or standard it is not possible, for instance, to identify areas for improvement or enhancement which is the first step in improving quality.

The quality assessment measures the difference between expected and actual performance. The Quality Tool identifies three dimensions of quality and seeks to provide a means of measuring the level of performance of a space or facility in terms of these dimensions.

The main issue is whether the definitions of quality are clear and unambiguous. Clarification of the definitions proved to be lengthy with the pilot authorities making a significant contribution to the refinement process. Whilst the Quality Tool was designed, as far as possible, to ensure that there was a clear definition of each attribute being measured, the pilot process showed that the interpretation of the definitions has varied between the pilots. The definition that caused the most difficulty was the type of space. This was fundamental because the assessment criteria employed depended on the type of space under consideration. There were also difficulties in trying to define the scope of the assessment in terms of the boundary of the area to be considered.

Some of the terms used in the definitions created difficulties. For example, the term “trusted adults” was open to interpretation. The examples given in the guidance were park keepers, street wardens and play rangers i.e. regular, paid staff who help to create a sense of safety for children and young people. In the event, some of the pilots included other groups of adults such as parents or grandparents.

Notwithstanding these problems, the pilots agreed that the final version was easy to use.

The assessment of quality is necessarily based on subjective views and it was inevitable that differences in perception would be likely to influence the scoring.

Whilst consistency in scoring was achieved within a pilot authority, through the process of moderation, it was not possible to achieve consistency between the pilots and any comparison of results has to be treated with caution.

5. Access Indicator

5.1 Definition

The access indicator sought to establish the proportion of children and young people who have access to at least three types (type A, type B and type C) of playing space or facility at least one of which is a dedicated place for play within the distances defined in **Table 5**. The definition is:

The percentage of children and young people aged from birth to 16 that have access to at least three different types (type A, type B and type C) of space or facility, at least one of which is a dedicated place for play and informal recreation, which are all within easy walking or cycling distance as defined in Table 5.

The method of collecting the data involved two stages. The first stage required an audit and classification of type A, type B and type C spaces and facilities within the pilot authority area. The second stage involved the mapping of the sites using a Geographical Information System and applying buffer areas around each site in accordance with the distance criteria set out in **Table 5**. The pilot sought to establish the extent to which children and young people had access to provision for play and informal recreation around their local neighbourhoods.

5.2 Method - Audit and Site Survey

5.2.1 Audit

The audit was primarily concerned with collating existing data held by individual local authority departments. The information required related to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation within the local authority area.

The main sources of exiting information were:

- Assessments undertaken to comply with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance 17¹².
- Data held by the Planning Department for plan making purposes and for the Development Plan Proposals Map.
- Grounds Maintenance data held on bespoke databases or on paper maps.
- Terrier Property data about land in Council ownership.
- Data held by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).
- Results of audits undertaken for the Play Strategy.
- Playground information held by Parks or Leisure Departments for annual inspections.

5.2.2 Classification of Spaces

The audit required the pilots to classify the spaces where children play on the basis of their size and function. Guidance on how to classify the spaces was included in the Guidance Manual and could also be found in Planning for Play¹³.

The specific spaces that need to be covered by the audit, in order of size, were:

Type A: 'Door-step' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

These included Small Equipped Play Areas (typically 3 to 5 items of equipment primarily aimed at under 8 year olds) and amenity green spaces with no equipment.

Type B: 'Neighbourhood' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

These included Large Equipped Play Areas (5 to 7 items) primarily aimed at 5-11 year olds, small, informal parks with small children's play area and sitting out areas, and small ball courts or kick about areas.

Type C: 'Local' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

¹² Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation. ODPM 2002.

¹³ Planning for Play: Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy. National Children's Bureau / Big Lottery Fund, March 2006. P49.

These included Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas (8+ items) providing for all children including teenagers with facilities such as Wheeled Sports Area, Ball courts, Multi Use Games Areas, youth shelters. It also included larger parks and playing fields or recreation grounds that were freely available for children to use as well as woodlands and natural areas.

This level encompassed supervised provision such as adventure playgrounds, open access play centres/schemes, play ranger and out-reach play projects.

5.2.3 Undertaking the audit

The first step is to review all existing databases to identify the precise location of all sites to be audited. This will ideally mean a grid reference or at the very least a full address and postcode for every site. Sufficient detail also needs to be gathered to classify each potential space for play.

Information Sources

Before embarking on an audit, existing information on open spaces and play spaces within the local authority needed to be compiled from a variety of sources including;

- Open Space audit undertaken for PPG 17;
- Audit of children's play facilities undertaken for the Play Strategy;
- Aerial Photographs;
- Housing association records
- Voluntary organisations such as local recreational trusts.
- Recreation Services/Grounds Maintenance records on parks and play areas;
- Playing Pitch Assessments; and
- Town/Parish Council consultations.

Audits of amenity greenspace¹⁴ undertaken as part of an assessment for PPG 17 were likely to have been limited to sites of 0.2 hectares and above. An area of this size is relatively large when considering the size of areas that can accommodate children's play. It was therefore recommended that the pilots give consideration to reducing the size threshold to 0.1 hectares.

Information relating to these smaller spaces probably already existed within the local authority. The department that is most likely to hold data about smaller spaces in housing areas was the Grounds Maintenance Department. This could be in the form of paper maps or could in electronic form using one of the commonly available software packages and GIS.

Given the resource implications, it was suggested to the pilots that they could reduce the need to audit all these smaller spaces by confining the search to those areas that currently have access to both a Type B and a Type C space.

The logic for adopting this approach was that these smaller spaces would typically be Type A spaces. If an audit of these spaces was required, it could be limited those areas which already have access to Type B and C spaces to determine whether these areas have access to all three different types of space. It would then be necessary to review these additional spaces to determine whether they were suitable for children's play. In the first place this should have been a desk exercise to assess the site's location. However, if this wasn't apparent from an inspection of the maps then a site survey would be required.

5.3 Method – Mapping

The mapping exercise is accomplished by using a Geographic Information System (GIS). In the first instance, all the spaces identified above need to be digitized (if they're not already done so) and then loaded into the GIS. Once in the GIS, each

¹⁴ The typology of open spaces set out in PPG 17 states: 'Amenity greenspace (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas) - including informal recreation spaces, greenspaces in and around housing, and village greens.'

space has a catchment radius (or buffer) drawn around it based upon the straight line distance as recommended in Table 5. (reproduced below).

Table 5: Distance thresholds for catchment areas.

Type of Space	Walking Distance (m)	Straight Line Distance (m)
Type A: `Door-step` spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation	100	60
Type B: `Neighbourhood` spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation	400	240
Type C: `Local` spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation	1000	600

This process produces virtual catchment areas around each space.

The user then has two options. The catchments can then be trimmed to take account of barriers to movement (e.g. Major Roads, Rivers, railway Lines etc.) or deployed directly into the Spatial Model. Trimming the catchments or buffers can be carried out automatically within the GIS, but this requires highly skilled and experienced GIS personnel. In addition, deciding which catchments to trim requires a reasonable degree of local knowledge. For example, there may be pedestrian tunnels or bridges across the barriers which aren't always visible on the base maps being used. In the absence of local knowledge, or where users don't have access to highly skilled GIS personnel, our recommendation is that the user proceeds without trimming.

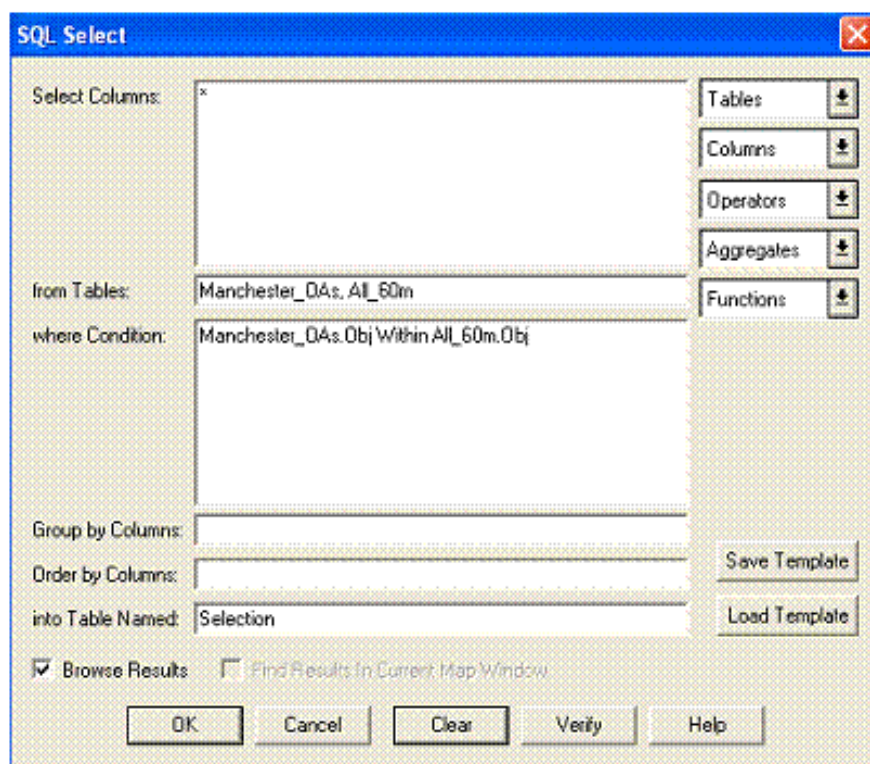
The next stage in the process is to import appropriate demographic data into the GIS. As a minimum, users should import census data at Census Output Area level. (This is the smallest area that census data is collected at, and as such is more accurate than Ward or Super Output Area data.) All local Authorities have free and unrestricted access to this data. If it can't be sourced locally within the authority, it can be downloaded for free from:

<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

Users may have access to more accurate data (e.g. School Pupil Data or Child Health System Data from their local PCT etc.) but our recommendation is that users should try and use the most up to date information collected at the most granular level.

The user is now in a position to extract demographic data *through* the catchment area buffers. This can be done in a number of ways, and depending on which GIS is being used, the actual process varies slightly.

In MapInfo, the user would use the SQL Select dialogue box to extract data points (containing demographics) that fall within specific catchment areas.



In the example above, the 'Manchester OAs' objects are selected where they fall within a table called 'All_60m objects'. This latter table contains all the 60m buffers, which were created around each play space. This SQL statement will produce a list of all the Output Areas which fall within the 60m catchment buffers. This exercise is then repeated for the 240m and 600m catchments and the end result is a table which looks like this

	OA	In_60m	In_240m	In_600m
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0001	1	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0002	0	0	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0003	1	0	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0004	1	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0005	1	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0006	0	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0007	0	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0008	0	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0009	1	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0010	1	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0011	0	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0012	1	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	00BNFA0013	1	1	1

In the table above, '1' should be read as 'Yes' and '2' as 'No'.

The demographics associated with these Output Areas can then be totalled for the relevant age ranges and a final figure is arrived at for the numbers of young people who have access to a play space with a 60m, 240m and 600m catchment.

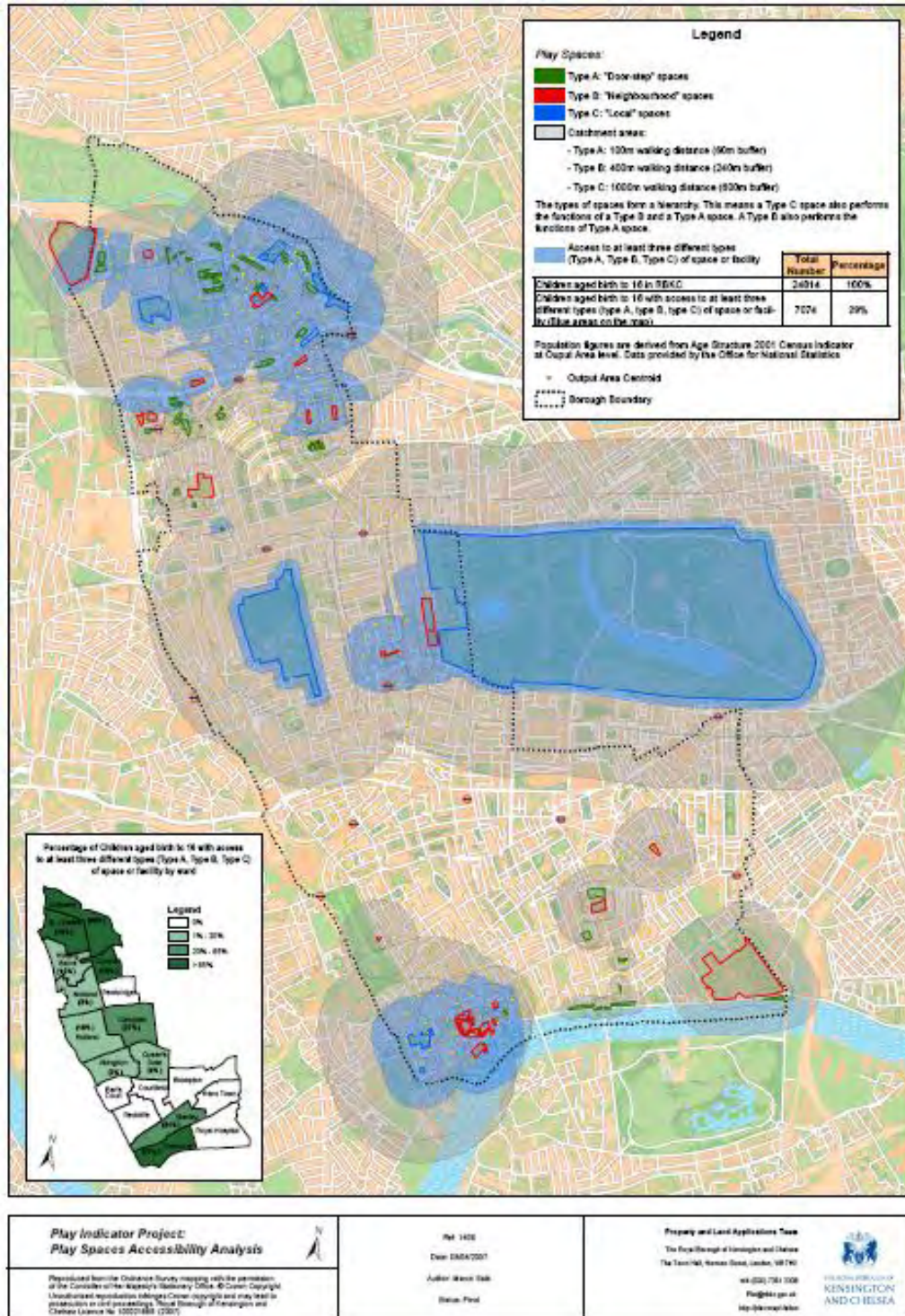
5.4 Results

(All results are compiled in a table at the end of this section. What follows below is a brief commentary on them.)

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Kensington and Chelsea provided what is undoubtedly the most succinct and most accessible report. An image of this is reproduced below:

Map1 Kensington and Chelsea Access Indicator



Kensington and Chelsea were fortunate in having access to highly skilled GIS technicians and a GIS specific meeting we had with their GIS team has undoubtedly paid dividends. In addition, whilst Kensington and Chelsea used ArcView GIS

(which has proven to be slightly problematic for some authorities) the skilled personnel managed to negotiate their way through the guidance to produce meaningful results, although this was a nine stage process.

No further documentation was provided by Kensington and Chelsea but we feel that nothing further is needed.

Kensington and Chelsea Maps

The single map and associated data from Kensington and Chelsea is very clear and concise. The buffers and the all-important overlaps are very clear and the information provided in the legend and elsewhere on the map is very clear. So clear, in fact, that the purpose and results would be accessible to someone who had no previous knowledge of this pilot. Going forward we would suggest that this format and layout forms the basis for any future work, with the possible addition of the kinds of cumulative percentage analysis tables provided by Kirklees reproduced below.

Bristol

Bristol encountered similar issues as Kensington and Chelsea (i.e. the GIS process was very time consuming.) with the use of their GIS. Both used ArcView and ended up collaborating with each other in order to overcome technical difficulties. One very useful recommendation from Bristol is that more detailed technical guidance be produced for users of different GIS packages. The two main packages seem to be MapInfo and ArcView. Bristol rightly felt that this could help improve consistency of results across local authorities and improve comparability of results.

Also of note is that Bristol felt that creating buffers around the boundary of the area containing the play equipment exaggerated the size of the catchment area. Instead, they generated the buffers around the actual play space. Once again, this will lead to difficulties when comparing results across different authorities and clearer and more justifiable guidance needs to be issued in the area to provide consistency.

Bristol produced three maps in total which again can be found in the appendices.

Bristol Maps

Bristol provided three maps in total, but the most useful is the 'KPI Sites and Population' map which is essentially a merge of the other two maps. This map shows the overlapped buffers and underlying census data from which the indicator can be calculated. The colouring is difficult to see and the backcloth map is over prominent but these are cosmetic issues which – whilst impacting upon the clarity of the map – should not get in the way of performing the analysis. However, given that a number of the pilot authorities have pointed out that the mapping of the data is extremely useful for a number of purposes, it is important that they be as clear as possible.

Kirklees

Kirklees used MapInfo and encountered very few problems. They did however trim the catchment area buffers to take account of barriers to movement which they found very time consuming. They also commented that once the buffers had been trimmed in this way, the end result produced a considerably reduced catchment area. Additional problems were encountered owing to the linear nature of the data i.e. the park boundaries had been digitized as a series of lines, rather than being digitized as polygons; and that the conversion process was fairly time consuming.

Kirklees also used Child Health System Data provide free by the local PCT. They felt that this was more accurate and up to date than Census data. However, they also commented that not all PCT's would make this available to local authorities, and were unsure about future access to this data.

Once again, Kirklees provided a number of maps and these can be found in the appendices.

Kirklees Maps

Kirklees provided two maps which show the geographical distribution of Youth Play facilities. These appear to be 'formal' play spaces and do not show the distribution of 'informal' play spaces. They also provided two further maps which show the play spaces and buffer catchment areas. These clearly show areas of deficiency as well as areas of reasonable or adequate provision. In addition, Kirklees very helpfully provided us with a number of GIS layers in a usable format and we have managed to

produce a number of images from them. These clearly show that Kirklees have gone so far as to trim the buffers on the Type C spaces to take account of Barriers to Movement. However, one of the maps shows output areas with 'over 20% children'. This shows that Kirklees have *looked at* the spatial relationship between high concentrations of children, and areas of provision and have produced maps showing the relationship between these two variables. In addition Kirklees provided two tables of information showing the results of their analysis at the Household level as well as numbers of children. These are reproduced below. It's worth noting that whilst the main focus of the access indicator is to calculate on the basis of access to 3 spaces, **Table 13** shows how this percentage progresses from access to no spaces through to access to 16 spaces. Finally, the results from Kirklees take no account of access to YPS provision – primarily because of lack of time. If they had done so, the percentage figures would almost certainly have been higher.

Table 13: Kirklees Domestic Properties

Total Properties = 173,467

Access to	Number	Percentage
No access	20,924	12.1
1 Area	16,693	9.6
2 Areas	19,031	11.0
3 Areas	24,659	14.2
4 Areas	25,165	14.5
5 Areas	20,114	11.6
6 Areas	18,502	10.7
7 Areas	12,360	7.1
8 Areas	7,054	4.1
9 Areas	4,151	2.4
10 Areas	2,540	1.5
11 Areas	207	0.1
12 Areas	1,375	0.8
13 Areas	586	0.3
14 Areas	80	0.0
15 Areas	17	0.0
16 Areas	9	0.0
Access to 1 or more areas	152,543	87.9
Access to 3 or more areas	116,819	67.3

Source: Kirklees Local Land and Property Gazetteer, February 2006

Table 14: Kirklees Children 0-15

Total Children 83,751

Access to	Number	Percentage
No access	7,928	9.5
1 Area	6,947	8.3
2 Areas	8,487	10.1
3 Areas	11,013	13.1
4 Areas	12,933	15.4
5 Areas	10,078	12.0
6 Areas	9,076	10.8
7 Areas	7,057	8.4
8 Areas	4,421	5.3
9 Areas	2,621	3.1
10 Areas	1,451	1.7
11 Areas	1,161	1.4
12 Areas	417	0.5
13 Areas	81	0.1
14 Areas	26	0.0
15 Areas	41	0.0
16 Areas	13	0.0
Access to 1 or more areas	75,823	90.5
Access to 3 or more areas	60,389	72.1

Bolton

At the time of writing there was little feedback on the strengths or weaknesses of the mapping process from Bolton. However, what we do know is that the mapping work was carried out by Environmental Services and that they in turn were relying on external consultants (who had recently carried out a PPG17 study) for the GIS data and layers. In addition, because of the different requirements of PPG17, smaller spaces would need to be added to the GIS and catchment buffers would need to be redone. Following an examination of the data and further consultation with Bolton it is now clear that Bolton didn't have the time or resources to make the necessary changes to the PPG17 data. This was mainly due to the late delivery of the GIS files from the external consultants who carried out the PPG17 study. Going forward it may be that there is some scope in combining the work done for PPG17 and the work required for this pilot. This does raise a considerable number of other issues and a detailed exploration of them is beyond the scope of this report. However, it might be something that CPC wish to explore further in future conversations.

Having spoke to Bolton further it is also clear that they didn't have sufficient time to generate raw figures for the access indicator. Instead, they produced two maps which show the quantities / percentages of 0 to 16 year olds at census output area level overlaid with play space buffers. These maps are included within the appendices.

Bolton Maps

The Bolton maps reveal the concerns expressed above. Because of insufficient technical guidance on the use of GIS, Bolton produced two maps which show the *percentage* of 0 to 15 year olds within each census output area overlaid with the open space information and associated buffers. It's worth pointing out that Bolton were very close to producing the final piece of analysis required – and it was (incorrectly) assumed that all the pilot authorities would have access to the skill levels necessary to complete the GIS analysis.

Manchester

Manchester encountered considerable difficulties using MapInfo GIS. They felt that there was insufficient technical guidance relating to the calculations required – particularly where census data has to be measured in relation to multiple catchments. There are a number of ways to do this and it is accepted that better technical guidance needs to be produced for future studies of this nature.

Manchester ended up employing an external resource (Salford GIS) to perform this task which took half a day and cost £350.00.

There was also confusion about how to treat barriers to movement. Whilst this has been mentioned above, once again it is accepted that this is an area which requires greater clarification going forward.

Manchester also reported the highest percentage of 0 to 16 year olds having access to play. In their written report to us they pointed out that when adapting the methodology “*results changed from 2-3% having access to 3 types of space to 95% cover in this respect, probably because there are a lot of C spaces*”. This does give cause for concern but a look at the map of catchments provided by Manchester goes some way towards explaining the very high percentage figure. Less ambiguity around typology definitions and greater clarity about the use of GIS would go some way towards resolving these issues.

Manchester Maps

The maps from Manchester are interesting in that they suggest that – given the data supplied by Manchester – there appears to be very little of the authority that doesn’t have access to play provision of some kind. As discussed earlier, Manchester encountered some difficulties during the GIS process and had a number of reservations about the typology definitions. Nevertheless, these are the maps that have been produced from their data and – within the context of a pilot – they are very important. Whilst in no way disputing the results, we feel that they might well emphasise the importance of addressing some of the typology definitions. They also highlight the need for improved guidance on the use of GIS.

Chelmsford

At the time of writing no results have been received from Chelmsford. This may be due to the fact that Chelmsford are in the process of switching from ArcView GIS to MapInfo GIS. They also reported that *“Population data only available on Ward basis, not super output areas. so cannot calculate % population access. Discussed with Senior Planning officer. The mapping is useless for the PI until it is matched with population mapping. Needs payment, upgrade of computer and further training”*. Again, clearer guidance on freely available population data might have solved this problem. During the pilot, we did offer to provide census data at output area level (more granular than super output areas) but this offer wasn't taken up by Chelmsford. Additional feedback from Chelmsford suggests that they did complete the mapping exercise (but not the population counts) but no usable maps have been provided at this time.

Chelmsford Maps

Chelmsford did provide maps in a little used GIS format (DataMap) which we were unable to convert or use in any way. These files are capable of being converted for use in other GIS packages. However, Chelmsford rightly pointed out that the guidance should have stipulated the formats required for our purposes at the outset of the study and this needs to be included in future versions. We have requested that Chelmsford send us images of the maps they have within their GIS but at the time of writing nothing has been received.

Table 12: Access Indicator Results.

Authority	% with access to 3 Spaces	Notes
Manchester	95	No calculations received
Kensington and Chelsea	29	
Bolton	-	No data received
Bristol	34.25	
Kirklees	72.1	
Chelmsford	-	No data received

5.5 Feedback from pilots

5.5.1 Data sources

All pilots used data from existing sources:

Bolton used PPG17 assessments; Grounds Maintenance; Terrier system (Corporate Properties); Planning Department Database; and database of play sites formed for the Play Strategy.

Bristol used data from grounds maintenance and parks and green spaces.

Chelmsford used data on play spaces and amenity green space from their Local Plan Inquiry in 1997, subsequently updated.

Kensington and Chelsea used PPG17 database from Planning; TMO database for housing estates; and open space database.

Kirklees used PPG17 data, plus 40- 50 play areas which have been constructed since the PPG17 list was produced in 2002.

Manchester used leisure and grounds maintenance databases.

Sites were excluded on the basis of the local knowledge of relevant staff, e.g. spaces with no value for play such as highway verges. Bristol excluded 20 equipped play sites in housing areas which were not publicly accessible. Kensington and Chelsea excluded gated spaces but included two spaces lying outside the borough which are important to the borough's children. Chelmsford found parish councils' data was difficult to obtain.

5.5.2 ABC classification (see also Quality PI feedback)

Three pilots found this very straightforward: Bristol, Kirklees and Manchester. The other three had problems. Bolton felt a lack of clarity in the guidance about this and when Kirklees visited to assess Bolton's spaces there was a lack of agreement as to the classification of some spaces. Kensington and Chelsea found the classification not easy, partly due to the large number of teams working on the audit and partly due to lack of clarity in the guidance. Chelmsford prefers different catchment areas, used in their 1997 Planning Inquiry - therefore Chelmsford ignored the catchment areas criteria and classified ABC according to the facilities' descriptions.

5.5.3 Mapping

All pilots did this in-house. Bolton built on PPG17 mapping. Bristol, Chelmsford and Kensington and Chelsea used Arcview. Kirklees and Manchester used Mapinfo.

Kirklees used Child Health System population data, i.e. 2006 data based on post codes which had been anonymised. This is a good annual data source which is more up to date than other sources such as the Census; and it is supplied free of charge by the PCT. Not all PCTs will release data to local authorities, however.

5.5.4 Problems

Bristol and Kensington and Chelsea found the mapping very tedious and time consuming due to the limitations of the software. The process required multiple steps. Due to the tedious nature and precision required it would be easy to make errors. Both pilots spent some time developing a method, duplicating each other. To overcome these problems would cost £15,000 for Arceditor. There was not enough guidance - it was not specific to the software and no CD was supplied.

Chelmsford had problems mapping population against provision - population data was only available on ward basis, not super output areas, so they could not calculate % population access. To overcome this, they need further cost, upgrade of computer and further training.

For Kirklees much of the data was in linear form and this had to be converted to polygons which was time-consuming. Trimming the buffers manually was also very time-consuming because there are a lot of play spaces and lots of rivers etc.

The main problem at Manchester was finding capacity in a small team to do their day to day jobs on top of this pilot, plus PPG17 and Strategy. Also Manchester had real difficulty in calculating the overlaps where an address point was covered by several types of space. There was no guidance on this. It involved a lot of logic and was difficult to apply. They had to employ a consultant to sort out the problem and give guidance on grid formulae. The guidance was also not clear about how to deal with the buffers, especially around barriers.

5.5.5 Usefulness of audit, maps and Access PI

There are very diverse opinions on the usefulness of the audit, mapping and access PI among the six pilots. Four pilots have a lot of positive things to say, but two have a lot of doubts. The positive comments, however, are more likely to be directed at the audit and mapping, and less at the access PI itself. This illustrates the difference between performance data which is useful for management and planning, and data which is useful for comparing authorities. The pilots are clearly more concerned with the former rather than the latter in the case of access.

Chelmsford think that the audit for the access PI has been a good exercise and will be continuously updated. It has helped to change the Council mindset about children playing in areas with no formal provision. It has raised awareness of play. It has been used as a good reason for discussing provision with the parish councils. It will be used in the Play Strategy. It has helped to identify areas of shortfall and this will be used in the LDF process and the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document. It will guide provision associated with new developments, which are very important for expanding provision. Chelmsford think that mapping of provision is really useful for pinpointing shortfalls; and more useful than the access PI. Provision

mapping will be useful for determining needs of new developments. It can also be used to assess developer proposals for play provision. It has raised a debate about areas of oversupply. It will lead to better provision.

For Kensington and Chelsea the use of the access PI data is wide ranging, stretching well beyond play services. It will inform the evidence base for the LDF and the play strategy. The play strategy is very broad and includes such things as transport policy. The data will also be incorporated into the Children and Young People's Plan, JAR, an initiative for the disabled and a PCT initiative, the parks strategy, extended services in schools, and links with housing associations. For Kensington and Chelsea the audit worked well- a very good data set was obtained with lots of support from colleagues. It will influence planning evidence. Section 106 money could be used for play rangers, to make up for infrastructure deficiencies. Kensington and Chelsea feel that the access indicator is quite narrow because of the exclusions, namely Private Squares, Play Centres (which are free to those on benefits), Play Rangers in schools. Also it is not clear how play spaces which children have access to for only part of the day will be treated.

Kirklees will use the audit information and mapping for the development of their play strategy. It will help with priorities for the future, especially for teenage provision. Members are expected to take a real interest. "This is one of the best tools we have for informing Section 106 decisions." Areas of deficiency have been mapped. This backs up the proposals for the lottery application. The data will be useful for cross agency working; it will have wider benefits. It will possibly be used for marketing purposes - putting on the intranet mapping (Planweb) and also enabling the public to see where the play spaces are.

Manchester will use the audit and maps to see the gaps in provision, to guide the summer outreach work. Also to look at the gaps in provision of play spaces; it will hopefully help redress the fact that decisions are politically driven without regard for need. However, Manchester don't trust the access PI outcome and will not use this score because they cannot see the value of it. They cannot see the purpose of the ABC classification, especially when there are multiple classifications for one site. It was felt that this is not logical or useful information. And it competes with NPFA

criteria - Manchester use a PI which counts the number of children within NPFA standard, fixed play areas. They prefer to use city address points than output areas or super output areas. This is simpler than the pilot PI.

Bolton have doubts about the value and usefulness of the access indicator. Bolton are not interested in looking at sites below 0.2 ha. They need to bring quality to the larger spaces. But they acknowledge that it will enable them to identify areas of deficiency.

Bristol are unlikely to use the access PI as a primary management tool. They are already ahead of this process with their own strategy; with a categorisation of sites from existing audits, with different buffers to those recommended by the pilot, which they will continue to use because the rest of Bristol Council use them. They did, though, acknowledge that the access indicator could be useful when considered alongside the quality indicator.

Bristol have other concerns. They do not like the PI combining access to both green space and designated children's play areas. All the management (and parental) attention in Bristol is on designated spaces (not just CPGs but other designations such as MUGAs and youth centres). They feel that counting type A spaces is not a useful way to protect them; they are 'beneath the radar' for planning and managerial purposes. They feel that putting a buffer around the total space boundary (e.g. a park) exaggerates the play catchment - Bristol uses buffers around the actual play space - and exaggerated buffers offer an excuse for not spending on further provision.

Bristol think that comparison of the access PI score with other authorities is problematic, particularly if type A spaces are included, because play-relevant circumstances differ so much.

5.5.6 Improvements

Bristol recommend 2 indicators instead of one:

- % of children with access to green space and
- % of children with access to a designated play area.

Bristol think that the guidance should either provide technical details on how to operate each type of software or be on general theory rather than specific to each software. Kensington and Chelsea suggest that a technical appendix is needed in the guidance which would provide the method/model for different software packages.

Chelmsford recommend scrapping catchment area descriptors for the ABC classification while Kensington and Chelsea recommend pictorial evidence in guidance to help with the ABC classification.

5.5.7 Cost

The resource commitment for the access PI was around two person-weeks for most of the pilots, although two had to pay direct costs in addition to the labour input. The lowest labour input, for Chelmsford, was for an incomplete task - they could not access the required population data to complete the PI:

Bolton = 1 person 2 weeks, others 3 days

Bristol = 1 person 20 hours; Corporate GIS staff – 22.5 hours

Chelmsford = various people 25 hours total, 1 person 8 hours

Kensington and Chelsea = 1 person 4 days; second person 25 hours; others 5 days + part of £5,500 (rest for quality PI)

Kirklees = 1 person 7 days; second person 6 hours, third person 5 days

Manchester = 1 person 10 days; second person 4 days + £350 GIS consultant

5.5.8 Required cooperation

Whilst one or two pilot departments are more or less self contained with sufficient GIS skills, notably Bristol and Manchester, others relied on good relationships with other parts of the council.

Bristol: Culture and Leisure

Manchester: Cultural Services and Play

Bolton: Environmental Services, Children's Services, Planning

Chelmsford: Children's Services, Planning, parish councils

Kensington and Chelsea: Planning, Corporate GIS, Policy and Performance, Play Management Team, Children's Fund, Parks and TMO.

Kirklees: substantial cooperation across numerous sections/departments.

5.5.9 Conclusions

In general, it is felt that the overall process of identifying and digitizing play provision into a GIS and then deriving catchments has been a very useful exercise. The value of this process extends beyond the scope of this particular exercise but most of the pilot authorities felt very strongly that an overview of provision – together with a view of areas of deficiency is very powerful. However, whilst we feel that the actual value of the spatial model utilized is very good, there were problems with the scope for interpretation of the typologies and therefore the inputs into the model itself. These have been addressed elsewhere in this report but are not in themselves a reason to reject the spatial model or methodology,

Perhaps of greater concern is the scope for interpretation of the typologies within the guidance. Whilst we don't feel that any of the pilot authorities have worked to a predefined agenda or set of outcomes, we do feel that ambiguity around typology definition does leave scope for pre-definition of outcomes before work commences. This has been expanded upon elsewhere in the report but it does need to be addressed before any further work is carried out based on the current guidance.

Given that the pilot authorities have interpreted the typologies and catchments in slightly different ways, direct comparisons of results derived by each pilot authority need to be treated with a degree of caution.

One final note. The pilot authorities were operating within an environment where they rightly felt that they had some degree of latitude to *interpret* the original guidance notes. This is wholly appropriate within a pilot study of this nature and in many ways the purpose of all pilot studies is to examine what works and what doesn't work. Clearly, the degree of interpretation varied and some of the resulting discoveries and *adapted* methodologies will prove to be very useful going forward. However, what this means in practice is that any meaningful comparisons between the results of the pilot authorities would at best be spurious, and at worst be

dangerous. The results should be seen as valid within the authority that produced them and no more than that.

Access Indicator – can it be deployed going forward?

There are a number of issues around this question which have been highlighted above. However, in many ways – given the *technological basis* of this indicator – it gives the least scope for interpretation by individual authorities. If the ambiguity and resulting scope for interpretation is removed from the typology definitions then the access indicator – with proper guidance – could be deployed in a way which would give *directly comparable results* across authorities. The main issues that need to be addressed include;

- Differing GIS packages and associated instructions.
- Differing approaches to where the buffer is drawn from (e.g. the play area or the boundary of the park containing the play area).
- Differing sources of demographic data

None of these issues are insurmountable and provided that these issues are dealt with, it is felt that the Access Indicator has considerable scope to be deployed on a wider basis in the future.

6. Evaluation

6.1 Introduction

In considering which criteria to use for our evaluation of the pilot indicators we had regard to the advice provided by a number of organisations, including the Audit Commission¹⁵, on the general characteristics of indicators that can help to ensure that proposed indicators will be useful and effective.¹⁶

6.1.2 Criteria for robust performance indicators

The Audit Commission identified thirteen criteria for assessing the robustness of a performance indicator. These are:

Criteria	Explanation
<i>Relevant</i>	Indicators should be relevant to the organisation in that they relate the to strategic goals and objectives. They should also be relevant to the people providing the data.
<i>Clear definition</i>	The performance indicators should have a clear and intelligible definition in order to ensure consistent collection and fair comparison.
<i>Easy to understand and use</i>	Performance indicators should be described in terms that the user of the information will understand.
<i>Comparable</i>	Indicators should be comparable on a consistent basis between organizations and this relies on there being agreement about definitions. They should also be comparable on a consistent basis over time.

¹⁵ On Target: The practice of performance indicators. Audit Commission 2000

¹⁶ Choosing the Right FABRIC - A Framework For Performance information Treasury 2001 This provides a similar set of criteria to the earlier Audit commission document.

	Comparability of performance indicators should include consideration of the context within which the comparison is taking place because external or internal circumstances can differ to such a degree that comparison is invalid. For example inter-authority comparisons could be misleading if there is considerable variation in the characteristics of the areas being compared.
Verifiable	The indicator also needs to be collected and calculated in a way that enables the information and data to be verified. It should therefore be based on robust data collection systems, and it should be possible for managers to verify the accuracy of the information and the consistency of the methods used.
Cost effective	There is a need to balance the cost of collecting information with its usefulness. Where possible, an indicator should be based on information already available and linked to existing data collection activities.
Unambiguous	A change in an indicator should be capable of unambiguous interpretation so that it is clear whether an increase in an indicator value represents an improvement or deterioration in service.
Attributable	Service managers should be able to influence the performance measured by the indicator.
Responsive	A performance indicator should be responsive to change. An indicator where changes in performance are likely to be too small to register will be of limited use.

Avoid	A performance indicator should not be easily manipulated
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<i>perverse incentives</i>	because this might encourage counter-productive activity.
<i>Allow innovation</i>	Indicators that focus on outcome and user satisfaction are more likely encourage such innovation to take place than indicators that are tied into existing processes.
<i>Statistically valid</i>	Indicators should be statistically valid and this will in large part depend on the sample size.
<i>Timely</i>	Data for the performance indicator should be available within a reasonable time-scale.

Source: On Target - The practice of performance indicators. Audit Commission.

6.1.3 Assessing the importance of the criteria

Devising a performance indicator that fulfils all the above criteria is challenging. Inevitably a performance indicator will score less well against one or two criteria. For national indicators, the Audit Commission advises that a performance indicator should be clearly defined, comparable, verifiable, unambiguous and statistically valid. Indicators that are published for the benefit of the local community should first and foremost be relevant and easy to understand.

6.2 Criteria used for the evaluation

Our evaluation of the four pilot indicators necessarily took a wider view of the requirements for a successful performance indicator. Nevertheless, we have taken the view that four criteria set out below capture the main elements of the Audit Commission's guidance.

National Comparisons

The performance indicators should allow meaningful national comparisons of the performance of local authorities to be made and provide an accurate picture of how each local authority is performing. They should also enable local authorities to make meaningful comparisons of their performance results against these national indicators over a number of years and to potentially compare their performance, at least with other similar authorities if not nationwide.

Local Management and Improvement

'Performance measurement is a vital component in the drive to improve services.'¹⁷

A key requirement for the project was that the performance indicators must be capable of being used to drive genuine improvement in provision for play and must not be merely seen to be a compliance activity.

Cost Effectiveness

The cost of producing performance information should be balanced against the value of the information and how it will be used to improve performance. Costs can be monetary, but there is also a need to consider the time taken in order to put in place the process for collecting and reviewing the information, and the need for expert support or knowledge. One way of minimising the cost is to use existing data sources.

Feasibility/Practicality

We have taken the criteria which good performance measures should meet such as whether they are well defined, relevant, avoid perverse incentives, attributable, timely, reliable and verifiable and summarized them under the umbrella heading of feasibility and practicality.

¹⁷ Acting on facts: Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the Improvement and Development Agency, 2002 .

Table XX: Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Participation (Household) ^H	Satisfaction ¹⁸ (Children – Schools)	Quality ^H		Access ^H
			Pilot	National Assessment	
National Comparisons	4	4	8	?	4
Local Management and Improvement	4	4	4	4	4
Cost Effective	On its own ?	Online 4	4	?	4
	As part of another survey 4	Paper Based ?			
Feasibility/Practicality	4	Online ?	4	?	4
		Paper Based 8			

^H This indicator could be mapped.

¹⁸ Revised Version of Questionnaire

6.3 Evaluation of the individual indicators.

6.3.1 Participation Indicator

For this evaluation we are only considering a participation indicator based on the household survey with data collected from adults. We consider that the data collected from children via the schools survey is unreliable and we have therefore not included this method.

National Comparisons

The Household Survey has been developed to collect information to provide a robust and reliable measure of participation. If every local authority collected the data for this indicator, national comparisons are practicable.

This indicator mirrors the Sport England indicator of:

‘Percentage of adults (16+) participating in at least 30 minutes moderate intensity sport and active recreation (including recreational walking) on 3 or more days a week.’

However, the data collection for the Sport England indicator differs in that participation figures for each Local Authority were collected through the national Active People survey that commenced in October 2005. Over a period of 12 months more than a million households were contacted by telephone and over 1,000 completed questionnaires achieved in almost every Local Authority area in England¹⁹. National comparisons are now available to local authorities via the Active People Diagnostic website.²⁰

¹⁹ For the Isles of Scilly and the City of London it will only be possible to complete 200 and 500 interviews, respectively. For some smaller authorities it will only be necessary to collect 800 interviews.

²⁰ http://www.sportengland.org/active_people_diagnostic_pdf.pdf

Local Management and Improvement

Local Performance Indicators are important in the day-to-day management and improvement of services. They provide the basis upon which to monitor performance and make decisions about service delivery.

The participation indicator is closely linked to the drive to meet local health targets. For example, Local Area Agreements include Mandatory Outcomes and Indicators to improve health and reduce health inequalities. This mandatory indicator, which is measured using standard mortality rates, is supported by some locally determined targets including the percentage of adults participating in at least 30 minutes moderate intensity sport and active recreation (including recreational walking) on three or more days per week, as measured by the Active People survey.

There is now pressure for local indicators for child obesity to be prioritised locally.²¹ This could include a target for the percentage of children and young people aged birth to 16 who play out for at least four hours each week.

The Department of Health report on obesity among children under 11²² found that the percentage of children aged 2 to 10 who were overweight (including those who were obese) rose from 22.7% in 1995 to 27.7% in 2003. However, increases in obesity prevalence were most significant among older children aged 8 to 10, rising from 11.2% in 1995 to 16.5% in 2003. The report examined the relationship between childhood obesity and children's level of physical activity and this found that there was a tendency for obesity rates to rise as children's levels of physical activity fell.

Cost Effectiveness

The relatively low response rates to the household survey and consequent wastage of resource in preparing mailings and in postage costs militates against undertaking a household survey for participation in isolation.

²¹ Tackling Child Obesity – First Steps, Report Prepared Jointly By The Audit Commission, The Healthcare Commission And The National Audit Office, 2006.

²² Obesity among children under 11, Department of Health April 2006.

We had suggested to pilots that there was scope for augmenting the basic questions required for the indicators with some additional questions but in the event there was insufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.

Whilst the Kirklees approach via schools secured a more targeted and cost-effective outcome than the general survey, it did result in a degree of compromise on both sampling and data gathering and there was little or no control over the distribution of questionnaires. Nevertheless, the only significant bias to have emerged from this approach is over the age of the children covered by the survey and this is a problem that can be addressed. The approach has a greater chance of success in a unitary authority such as Kirklees. The lessons learnt from Chelmsford suggest that it is far less likely to succeed in the smaller district authorities.

In reality, it is far more likely that the questions in the household survey would be included in a broader based survey that seeks to gather data for a range of indicators. Alternatively, they could be part of a participation survey such as the Active People survey. On this basis we consider that the indicator would be cost effective.

Feasibility/Practicality

There were some issues concerning definitions used in the surveys and in particular what constitutes “play”. The guiding principle of the “three frees” is very helpful but necessarily the survey has to rely on respondents themselves deciding what activities were included in play. Our approach to what constitutes “playing outside” was to ensure that the questions were as inclusive as possible, allowing respondents to answer the question fully even if we then eliminated some of their answers.

Timing is an important factor in securing robust and comparable data. The amount of time that children play outside is strongly subject to climatic conditions, to “disposable time” and to the onset of darkness. Whilst we had sought to ensure that all the surveys were carried out to a tight, defined timetable, which would have been early in the autumn term, before half term, this proved not to be possible for the pilot. However, in a situation where local authorities would have a significantly longer period in which to prepare, we believe that it would be feasible for surveys to be carried out at the same time of the year.

The participation indicator ought to be seen as being relevant to any local authority where the health of children is considered to be a priority. As part of the suite of indicators for Local Area Agreements, for instance, it would complement the indicator relating to participation in moderate exercise in the over 16 years age groups.

The availability of opportunities for playing outside is attributable to a number of internal local authority departments including play services, children's services, planning, parks and also registered social landlords. However, given the requirement for integrated working introduced by 'Every Child Matters', emphasis is now being placed on improving outcomes for children and young people. All organisations concerned with play therefore have a central role in helping to deliver these outcomes.

With regard to statistical validity, there was some confusion initially about the method to be used in order to calculate the hours of play. However, we issued revised guidance stating in detail how this should be done and are confident that the calculation of the average number of hours is now statistically robust.

It may be necessary to adjust the participation results for deprivation in the same way that this is done for the Sport England indicator. However, the effects of this adjustment on the indicator's validity have not been tested.

6.3.2 Satisfaction Indicator

For this evaluation we are only considering a satisfaction indicator based on the schools survey with data collected from children. We consider that the data collected from adults about satisfaction strongly relates to issues, notably safety, that do not have a direct bearing on the quality of the play experience and that this data is better collected from the users i.e. the children. This indicator represents the single biggest opportunity to get children involved; it provides an opportunity to focus on customer satisfaction and engagement. However, there is a need to review the questions asked in the survey. Evidence from the pilot process suggests that children and young people did not find it easy to differentiate between 'range' and 'quality' and this needs to be clarified.

National Comparisons

There is some precedent for using this type of indicator nationally. The Tellus Survey asks children to rate the area around their school in terms of whether it is good for children and young people.

More recently the Tellus2 survey has been developed jointly by Ofsted, DfES and Ipsos MORI as a qualitative user perception survey to gather comparable data on children and young people's views across the country. It will be completed by a sample of children in all local authority areas annually from 2007. It will provide statistically reliable data which is representative of the area, and will allow comparison with national and statistical neighbour benchmarks. Whilst Ofsted is responsible for conducting this survey, Ipsos MORI and DfES have been involved to devise the methodology and develop and test the questions.

The survey asks children and young people questions about their satisfaction with services (including aspects of their school life) and questions relating to the five Every Child Matters outcomes, including issues like healthy eating, participation in positive activities and bullying.

Local Management and Improvement

At the local level the satisfaction indicator has the potential to fulfill two functions. Primarily it could be a tool for operational service improvement. However, for the pilots it was also seen as having an important role in enhancing the authorities' accountability to children and young people.

At the national level some evidence is already available about children's satisfaction with provision for play. An NOP poll carried out for the Children's Society in 1999, showed that 73% of children want more local places for children to play. Other research undertaken in 1999²³ found that two thirds of 9-11 year olds in the UK are dissatisfied with their current level of outdoor play in the areas where they live. For 15-16 year olds this rose to 81%. This dissatisfaction level is higher than any other

²³ Livingstone, S, & Bovill, M (1999) *Young People*, New Media, London: LSE/ICT

European country. In stark contrast 79% of 15-16 year olds in Switzerland believed they had access to sufficient outdoor activities in the area where they live. ²⁴.

The Best Value satisfaction indicators such as the Best Value Performance Indicator BV119e (user satisfaction survey²⁵), the percentage of residents satisfied with local parks and open spaces has been used as for the Public Service Agreement, PSA 1 target, on neighbourhood renewal and social exclusion. The target in 2004 was:

‘To increase the percentage of residents satisfied with local parks and open spaces by four percentage points nationally, and by six percentage points overall for residents living in local authority districts in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, above the baseline year 2003-04.’

In response, local authorities have looked at a range of activities that could be co-ordinated as a focused drive to improve the public’s perception and experience of parks and open spaces. Used appropriately satisfaction targets can help to emphasise, communicate and achieve stated priorities.

It is clear that young people are keen to play their part in bringing about improvements in provision. Understanding how young people view their local spaces to play and ‘hang out’ is critical to bringing about improvements in provision at a local level. However, it is also clear that existing engagement strategies are failing to reach many children and young people and that there is a need for processes that show a clear correlation between consultation and action. Solutions to this tend to be qualitative in nature and compromise statistical validity and comparability across time as well as between authorities. In seeking to ensure that quality facilities and spaces are available for children and young people’s play and informal recreation across their local area it is important that local authorities respond to the needs and aspirations of young people.

²⁴ Cited in Green Spaces, Better Places: Working Group 3, People and Places, DTLR, London, May 2002, p.30

²⁵ BVPI user satisfaction surveys are carried out every three years, through a sample survey within each local authority district, using a methodology and timetable agreed by ODPM. The achieved sample in each area is at least 1,100.

It is our view that the satisfaction indicator can provide a basis for local target setting and for comparing the performance of similar local authorities.

Cost Effectiveness

Consideration of the cost effectiveness of the schools survey is based on two options. In the first place, a web-based survey is relatively inexpensive to set up provided a standard questionnaire is used. It starts to become more expensive once additional questions are included especially where these differ between local authorities. Time and staff resources are required to establish contacts within the school and to arrange for times when pupils are able to gain access to computers. In some cases it may be necessary for staff to attend the school and provide support to pupils and teaching staff. This is especially important where special schools are participating. The key unknown cost here is in the recruitment of schools. Two of the pilots, Bristol and Manchester, experienced serious difficulties in recruiting any schools. In the case of Manchester, a member of staff was specifically assigned to undertake this task and spent a significant amount of time without much success.

There are similar concerns in relation to the paper-based survey. There was a considerable amount of wastage experienced with the Chelmsford paper-based survey, largely as a result of poor distribution by the schools. A successful outcome would probably have involved considerably more staff time being spent within the schools to ensure proper distribution and collection of the survey material.

We have concluded that a web-based survey would be the most cost effective method for conducting the schools survey.

Feasibility/Practicality

At this stage we would only consider the web-based survey. However, there are concerns about the feasibility of the satisfaction indicator. In particular there are concerns about the lack of clarity in the definitions used in the questionnaire used for the pilot. The questions relating to 'range' and 'quality' would appear to be ambiguous and open to differences in interpretation. They therefore need further work and some further piloting before they could be used. At present it is difficult to

be confident that children fully understand the meaning of the questions and consistent collection and fair comparison are therefore not possible.

At present we could not be confident that it would be possible to obtain data on a consistent basis that would facilitate comparisons between local authorities because of the lack of agreement about definitions.

There is some concern that with the web-based system, data collection is not wholly robust and it is difficult to verify the accuracy of the information and the consistency of the methods used. There are ways of overcoming this through registration of respondents but this requirement is known to discourage children's participation.

The satisfaction performance indicator itself, however, is easy to understand and is comparable with definitions used by existing Best Value indicators. It is also an indicator that would be of relevance to a local authority. It could for instance relate to the strategic goals and objectives of the Play Strategy.

It is clear that other satisfaction indicators have been responsive to change. Kirklees, for example, achieved a 5% increase in its parks satisfaction score following measures to put grounds maintenance staff in parks outside typical daytime hours such as in summer evenings. Park wardens have been introduced to a range of parks to encourage a greater sense of respect and ownership of the parks, through talking to people who use the parks, organising events and planning inter-park activities. A Parks Improvement Plan co-ordinated a range of planned improvement works across the district.

Our main concern about the viability of the schools survey is that it relies on the relationship between the authority and its local schools. Even where an authority has a good relationship with schools, it is likely that some schools have stronger relationships than others; relationships are also vulnerable to staff and policy changes. In terms of statistical validity it is likely that several authorities would struggle to achieve even a modest sampling requirement. The selection of schools also has a significant impact on the sample structure, particularly as regards ethnicity. The number of schools in a local authority area will vary widely between authorities, making it impossible to specify numbers of schools or even proportions

of schools that should take part. In these circumstances we question whether it is possible to achieve comparability of results between local authorities.

6.3.3 Quality Indicator

The development of the Quality Tool raises the question about whether this methodology could be rolled out nationally to create a national quality standard similar to the Green Flag Award standards. In this evaluation we have therefore considered the quality indicator as it was piloted and have also sought to examine the use of an indicator based around a quality standard.

The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. It is an independent voluntary annual award scheme that recognises high standards of management and maintenance of public parks and green spaces. The Civic Trust in association with CABI Space administers it. Parks and green spaces must score a minimum of 50% on the desk assessment (score 15 out of 30) and 60% in the field evaluation (score 42 out of 70) with a combined score of 66 or above, to achieve Green Flag Award status. Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status.

The PSA Floor Target for Liveability: iii) % local authorities with Green Flag Awards is:

'By the end of 2008, to increase to 60% the proportion of local authority districts nationally, and to 60% the proportion of local authority districts in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, with at least one park or green space that meets Green Flag Award standards.'

National Comparisons

The quality indicator used in the pilot is too dependent on local context and is too subjective to facilitate national comparisons. Whilst every effort was made to ensure that a consistent approach to scoring was achieved, it is clear from the inter authority comparisons that there were significant differences between the pilots in their interpretation of the criteria and the results produced.

The judging for the Green Flag Award is carried out by a peer group of judges who bring together a range of different expertise. Most judges are drawn from local authorities or the wider green space sector. A total of 201 judges were used in 2003. Judging is carried out in two stages: a review of the submission and supporting evidence followed by both accompanied and unannounced site visits.

We consider that this type of peer group assessment could address some of the concerns about the use of the quality indicator for national comparisons.

Local Management and Improvement

There was general agreement that the quality assessment tool is useful as a mechanism for making internal comparisons, planning and management. It would be possible to compare scores over time and assess whether improvements have been achieved. It also provides a reasonable basis for decision making.

Chelmsford, for example, has started to use the information in deciding on the renewal of play equipment/areas.

The tool has undergone substantial changes from its very first inception and all the pilots agreed the latest version was both user friendly and practical.

Comparing scores between local authorities could be a useful way of informing the development of play and priorities for improvement. However, it could only offer a basic, albeit useful, measure of how well the local authority is doing compared to others. Whilst the tool has not been tested to see if it can support the designing of new sites the results from the pilots suggest it could offer an important methodology for doing so.

All the scores – location, play value and care and maintenance – offer rich information on each site and can potentially help to design and develop new and existing sites with a better understanding of how play areas are used or not used by children and why. A low location score and high play value score may mean, for example, that the play area is designed well but not used well or used inappropriately.

Cost Effectiveness

Most of the pilots decided to assess either all or a substantial number of their dedicated play spaces. The advantage of this approach is that a baseline has now been established against which changes over time can be measured. The guidance suggested that only a sample of sites was necessary although a complete survey could be undertaken if this was the preferred approach. The cost of undertaking the larger survey means that these authorities have 'front loaded' their costs. They committed about two or three weeks of staffing resource to the quality assessment. This was considered to be a reasonable commitment given the value of the information obtained.

Feasibility/Practicality

The quality indicator appears to have been highly relevant to the people who undertook the surveys. It is also of relevance to other local authority departments including planning who will use the information for negotiating S106 agreements in relation to new developments. It is of relevance to asset managers with a remit to develop, maintain and renew place space provision. It is also of relevance to children's services with a responsibility to deliver 'Every Child Matters' outcomes.

A key problem with undertaking the piloting of the quality indicator was the time taken in reaching a workable assessment tool. The key problem here was the difficulty in refining the definitions to try and eliminate inconsistencies in interpretation. A great deal of time and effort was put into the process, not least by the pilot authorities themselves. The final version of the tool is close to providing clear and intelligible definitions although it is likely to require further development in an effort to ensure consistent collection and fair comparison.

The quality assessment breaks down into three elements, which are easy to understand and use. Consideration of the elements separately as well as in terms of an overall assessment provides a better level of understanding of the important attributes that contribute to a successful space.

At present the indicator is not comparable on a consistent basis between local authorities partly because there is not complete agreement about definitions. As an

internal assessment the indicator has the potential to facilitate comparisons on a consistent basis over time. Inter-authority comparisons would be misleading because there is considerable variation in the characteristics between local authority areas.

The assessment sheets for the quality tool do ensure that information is collected and calculated in a way that enables the information and data to be verified. However, this is dependent on the local authorities taking a consistent approach to the classification of spaces. The definitions of the three different types of space are ambiguous and open to interpretation. The type of space determines which assessment sheet and therefore which criteria are applied to each individual space. The evidence from the pilots is that the classification of spaces was not consistent. Service managers responsible for the management of facilities and spaces for all children and young people's play and informal recreation are able to influence the performance measured by the indicator through improvements to the quality of those spaces. This means that an assessment undertaken in future should result in a change to the quality indicator. Some of the pilots are considering undertaking a rolling review of their spaces on a phased programme basis that will allow sufficient time for improvements to register changes in the indicator results.

Whilst it would be easy to manipulate the quality scores within an authority we do not consider that this would lead to the encouragement of counter-productive activity.

One aspect that has not been considered during the pilot process is the impact of innovation. However, improvements to quality do open the possibility of more innovative approaches to providing facilities and spaces for all children and young people's play and informal recreation.

The development of the weighting of the results to reflect the relative importance of particular factors has ensured greater statistical validity.

6.3.4 Access Indicator

National Comparisons

This indicator mirrors the Accessibility Indicator proposed by Sport England and the Audit Commission as part of the CPA indicators²⁶. The indicator is to be included in the culture service assessment for single tier authorities.

Easy access to quality sports facilities is considered to be one of the fundamental building blocks in providing the opportunity for getting people active and improving the health of the nation. Similarly, easy access to different types of play space or facility, at least one of which is a dedicated place for play and informal recreation is seen as a fundamental requirement for getting children active and helping to tackle the growing problem of child obesity. Outdoor play encourages children to be active and can have a significant impact on their general health and fitness, so it has an important place in the delivery of key objectives for both the Department of Health and the Government more broadly.

Time for Play²⁷ sets out what government is doing to encourage play opportunities. The Government is seeking to ensure that children who have little access to play facilities and those with a disability are given the opportunity to enjoy safe, modern playgrounds.²⁸

The assessment of the extent to which this national objective is being achieved will depend on the availability of coherent, high quality information, which demonstrates whether this outcome is being achieved in relation to national targets and local priorities. It is therefore good practice for local authorities to compare their performance against that of other authorities or against national averages.

²⁶ The Accessibility Indicator is: '% of population that are within 20 minutes travel time (Urban areas – by walk; Rural areas – by car) of a range of 3 different sports facility types of which one has achieved a quality assured standard.' A lower threshold of 30% and an upper threshold of 50% has been set.

²⁷ Time for Play, Encouraging greater play opportunities for children and young people, DCMS, 2006.

²⁸ Labour Party Manifesto, 2005.

Together with physical access, the range of types of provision is also essential in giving children and young people a choice of different facilities. Greater choice in the different types of play facilities which children and young people have access to near where they live will increase the likelihood that they will become more active. The indicator is set at a choice of at least three different facility types, of which one of which is a dedicated place for play and informal recreation.

The Sport England indicator uses the Active Places database and the catchment analysis is undertaken by Sport England. The indicator uses either a 20-minute walk time or a 20-minute drive time reflecting the fact that people are more likely to drive to facilities in rural areas, and walk in urban areas. The indicator uses the Office for National Statistics (ONS) rural and urban area classification 2004 to define urban and rural areas.

The access indicator for play relies on the ability of local authorities to audit the spaces and provision for children and young people. National planning policy guidance requires that local authorities should undertake a local audit of these types of space.²⁹ The indicator therefore seeks to use existing local authority data that is being collected nationally.

Catchment analysis has to be undertaken by the local authorities themselves. Most local authorities now have GIS capabilities and it is a relatively straightforward process to undertake the analysis for the calculation of the access indicator.

The results obtained from the pilots indicate that this is an indicator that could be used nationally to provide a measure of performance for a national service delivery priority.

Local Management and Improvement

All the pilots reported that the auditing and mapping processes had been an extremely valuable exercise in providing an understanding of their current levels of provision and an important tool for establishing priorities for the future and improving

²⁹ Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)17:Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, DCLG.

access to provision. It was particularly helpful for identifying gaps in provision and areas of deficiency and this will inform planning decisions, particularly about developer contributions for new development proposals. The combination of information on provision and child population data provided a clear picture of the extent to which current and potential future needs are being met.

The nature of the indicator means that rural locations would be disadvantaged when compared with more densely populated urban areas. Children living in a sparsely populated rural area are far less likely to have access to three types of space or facilities compared to their urban counterparts. For this reason, comparisons would need to be made between similar authorities. This could be achieved by using the ONS rural and urban area classification.

There are some concerns about potential lack of consistency in the interpretation of the results and the calculation of the indicator itself. Different interpretations can lead to significant variations and this may limit the usefulness of making comparisons between local authorities. At a local level, it would appear that the strength of the indicator lies in the process of preparing the information rather than the indicator result itself.

Cost Effectiveness

One of the key strengths of this indicator is that once the audit work has been undertaken and the catchment analysis completed, the data only needs updating. Whilst the initial mapping process is relatively time consuming, most of the costs will have been incurred in this first stage. It would appear that some GIS packages have fewer capabilities than others and this does influence the time required. The data will need to be kept under review and updated to reflect changes in provision but this is unlikely to require any substantial resource input.

Feasibility/Practicality

This indicator is clearly relevant to the broader Government aim to ensure that children have access to play facilities. It is also likely to be of direct relevance to local authority objectives set out in the Play Strategy. It has the potential to be a driver of improvement both for individual councils and at a national level.

Its use in identifying priorities for planning will have relevance for the preparation of Local Development Frameworks and securing on-site provision and off-site contributions in connection with new housing development. One of the outcomes of the pilot process has been the improvement in inter-departmental co-operation particularly between asset managers such as parks and leisure departments, children's services and planning departments. These departments recognise that they are able to influence future improvements in provision and thereby the performance measured by the indicator.

The pilot process has shown that the definitions of different types of spaces and facilities remains ambiguous and as a consequence it has not been possible to ensure consistent collection and fair comparison based on clear and understandable definitions. There must be some concern about whether the indicator will be responsive to change if the problem of definitions cannot be addressed.

Whilst the indicator itself and the visual output from the mapping process are very clear and easily understood, there was less clarity about what was being measured. It would be difficult to make consistent comparisons of the results of the pilot authorities because of the lack of agreement about definitions. However, it should be possible to refine the definitions and achieve an indicator which enables consistent comparisons between similar groups of authorities to be made, and these would be comparable on a consistent basis over time.

The use of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) rural and urban area classification 2004 to define urban and rural areas provides a basis for establishing consistent comparisons between local authorities with similar characteristics.

The indicator is founded on accurate data collection, i.e. the audit of spaces and facilities, which provides the evidence base for the preparation of the Local Development Framework. This will in due course be subject to public examination and challenge through the LDF Examination in Public (EiP). This process should ensure that the information is collected in a way that enables the information and data to be verified. The data could easily be updated on an annual basis as part of the annual monitoring programme.

One innovative idea that emerged from the pilot process was that of combining the mapping of provision with both quality and satisfaction to provide further insights into the extent to which the needs of children and young people are being met.

6.3.5 Combined Indicators

The potential to combine certain indicators emerged during the course of the pilot process. Whilst we have not been able to evaluate these they are described here for completeness.

Quality and Mapping

Several of the pilots felt that the mapping process was extremely valuable to them for future management and improvement of provision. Combining this with the results of the quality assessments provided a further dimension to their understanding

Quality and Access

The access indicator provides the local authority with information about children who don't have access to the three different types of provision. Combining this information with the results of the quality assessments provides information about whether children and young people have access to provision that is of an acceptable quality.

Quality and Satisfaction

Whilst none of the pilots has done this to date, it was felt that there is potential to map the satisfaction results and then compare these with the results of the quality assessments to see whether there is any correlation.

6.3 Overall Conclusions

We could not have undertaken this pilot without the willing participation of the six pilot authorities. The success of this pilot has been largely due to the support, enthusiasm and commitment of the participants and the interest of the Children's Play Council. Without the substantial effort made by the Project Leaders and the contributions of the individual members of staff engaged in the project, the pilot would not have been possible.

Overall we consider that the four indicators work well together as an integrated framework and that there is a strong relationship between them. In terms of the individual indicators we have arrived at the following conclusions:

Participation Indicator

The Participation Indicator would only be feasible with a household survey of adults. The indicator would enable national and local comparisons to be made and in principle we consider that it has potential to be a viable indicator. However, there are resource issues around the sample size required, although these could be mitigated by combining the survey with other research needs.

Satisfaction Indicator

We would only recommend web-based schools survey of children for collecting the data for the Satisfaction Indicator. As an indicator it could be used for national and local comparisons and has the strength of being the only indicator that captures the views of children. There are significant resource issues in terms of securing school's involvement and in many cases this will be outside the local authority's control. The basis for the selection of schools provides a further constraint. There is concern about the capacity of schools to handle the significant level of web traffic involved because many schools do not have the IT capacity and there is no uniformity in the levels of provision. We consider that satisfaction has the potential to be a viable indicator but that there are some significant practical difficulties.

Quality Indicator

The Quality Indicator could not be used for national or local comparisons because it is not possible for the assessments to be undertaken in a consistent manner. Concerns remain about definitions and the typology of spaces. The Quality Tool does have considerable potential as a management tool for establishing priorities for improvement and it could be combined with some of the other indicators. At this stage, however, we could not recommend this as a national indicator.

Access Indicator

The Access Indicator could potentially be used for national and local comparisons. It has certainly proved to be a powerful local management tool. Generating the data

initially requires significant input but once this has been undertaken it would only require regular updating. However, there are concerns about the definition of the types of space. A key benefit of this indicator is that it mainly makes use of data that the local authority is already required to produce. The main resource issues relate to the mapping process and the variable technical skills available within local authorities. Without senior management 'buy-in' to the process there appears to be difficulty in securing the necessary GIS support. If these resource constraints could be overcome, it has potential to be a viable indicator.

APPENDIX I

QUALITY TOOL ASSESSMENT SHEETS

Introduction

The more children play out freely, the more opportunities they have to build friendships and a network of social contacts. Playing out helps to build their bodies, gets them fit and teaches them vital skills such as: planning, negotiating, being creative, not being afraid to take risks and to experiment, having fun and enjoying themselves. The assessment tool aims to create the best possible conditions for that natural and most important activity for children.

The aim of the quality assessment is to assess the quality of play provision for children. Although children do play in numerous spaces and places, parks and designated play areas can significantly enhance children's capacity to play out freely and increase the quality of their play experiences. In this assessment we focus on three major aspects to children's outdoor play: the location of play areas, the play value and care and maintenance. The guide also assesses three different types of play spaces and facilities:

Type A – doorstep space and/or facility

Type B – Neighbourhood space and facility

Type C – Local space and facility

Location

Research shows that location is perhaps the single most important factor in how well children use not only play areas but open spaces. In general, children like to play locally where they can be seen, see others and meet

others. Young people are able to roam further and can therefore use Neighbourhood play areas, although they too like to feel safe wherever they are "hanging out".

Disabled children and parents/carers with buggies should be able to access the play areas as much as non-disabled children. Often children will play with younger siblings who may need to be taken to the area in a buggy or push chair.

The scoring is designed to identify the suitability of the location of play areas and spaces where children may play.

Play value

The assessment deliberately does not focus on fixed equipment play grounds but considers the different, innovative and challenging ways in which children can experience sensations such as rocking, swinging and sliding – this is particularly true for some disabled children whose impairments mean they cannot for example, sit on traditional swings.

The natural environment offers many opportunities for this and consideration should be given to the varied and interesting ways in which children can access different types of play. Quiet, contemplative play is as important as boisterous and physical play and although children will play in their own way in any given area, their play can be enriched through creating appropriate and stimulating play environments.

Children need to take risks to learn about and understand their own capabilities. Risk does not mean creating hazardous environments, but it does mean ensuring opportunities for challenging themselves are available through design.

Care and maintenance

All areas will require that children can play free from hazards. This section aims to assess the quality of care and maintenance of play spaces and areas.

Guidelines and Definitions

Score between one and five with one as the lowest score and five as the highest score 0 if absent.

TYPE A: Doorstep space or facility					
For Type A assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
INVOLVMENT OF CHILDREN					
Were children involved in the development of the site? (This score is for your own use only. It will not be counted in the final score).	Children were not consulted on any aspect of the development of the site.		Children were consulted about the development of the site once.		Children were consulted continuously and participated actively in the design and development process throughout.
LOCATION					
Proximity to housing	Site is located in an isolated area, far from housing or community buildings		Site is located reasonably close to housing		Site within 100 metres walking distance of housing or community buildings

TYPE A: Doorstep space or facility					
For Type A assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
Well used by children	Site is used by few or no children at whom it is aimed. There is no evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass and marks left by children		Site has a reasonable level of use by those children at whom it is aimed		Site is well used by children. There is evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass and marks left by children
Informal oversight	Site has obstructed lines of sight, few passers by at any time		Site has some informal oversight by adults but passers by are few, or only at certain times		Site has a good level of informal oversight by adults, for example views are unobstructed, site is in an area with people frequently passing by or through it
Getting there	Site is on opposite side of a major access barrier for the majority of children who would hope to use it		Children can get to the site from home or school but need to take a circuitous route or cross a busy road to get there and the site has limited access by footpath or cycle route		Children can get to the site easily, safely and independently from their homes or school for example: Footpaths or cycle routes pass the site. No need to cross major barriers (e.g. busy roads) to access site.
Personal safety, security and lighting	Site and access routes feel unsafe even in day light		Site and access routes feel safe in daylight but not after dark		Site and access routes feel safe at all times and have good exit routes. Both are well lit after dark if open.

TYPE A: Doorstep space or facility					
For Type A assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
Physical /mobility access to the site	One or more groups of children are excluded by poor access; site is not readily accessible to buggies. Poor pathways to the site, uneven ground, steps, sudden changes to surfacing are not highlighted.		Site can be accessed by some e.g. those pushing buggies and children with some mobility, but presents difficulties for others e.g. those with severe impairments, so that they cannot take full advantage of the facility.		Space is accessible for children with different abilities, behaviours, and sensory capabilities. Site is accessible to buggies. Good pathways to the site, even ground and no steps. Entrances and sudden changes in surfaces are highlighted.
Meeting other children	Site located where no other children likely to pass by e.g. away from homes, hidden away.		Site located where there may some opportunity for other children to pass by e.g. a quieter road.		Site located where there is a very high likelihood of other children passing by and joining in play e.g. on the way to and from school or local shops
PLAY VALUE					
Enticing to children to play	Signs prohibiting children from playing e.g. no ball games, no children; unappealing, tired, lacking in warmth		Children have restricted access, or are limited in what they can do by regulation or by-law. Site locked when children may wish to play.		Visible welcome to children, colourful, child-friendly and appealing. Children and adults feel relaxed (if observed) and at ease.

TYPE A: Doorstep space or facility					
For Type A assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
Play features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) – quantity and range	Very few play features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offers none of the following possible experiences or sensations for children: Swinging Sliding Climbing Rotating Rocking		A limited number of features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offering at least one of the following possible experiences or sensations for children Swinging Sliding Climbing Rotating Rocking		A sufficient number of features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offering at least three of the following experiences or sensations for children Swinging Sliding Climbing Rotating Rocking
Movement (see definition of “site” above)	Site offers few features that enable running, tumbling, rolling or moving around		Site offers a limited opportunity for movement		Children can run, tumble, roll, and freely move around.
Ball games	No space for ball games or ball games prohibited		Small space or too close to equipment to allow free play		Ball games area sufficient to kick a ball around, not too close to other

TYPE A: Doorstep space or facility					
For Type A assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
			with balls		play features
Seating for children	No places for children to sit		Limited places for children to sit, not suitable for playing together or for table games		Children can sit and play together, places for children to sit are incorporated into the play space, and near to tables or other seated play surfaces
Play opportunities for disabled children.	Site offers little or nothing for children with sensory or physical impairments.		Limited play offer to children with physical or sensory impairments. Disabled children do not play with non-disabled children.		All features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) for play are fully accessible to children with different abilities, behaviour, sensory or physical impairments. Disabled and non-disabled children are able to play together.
Added play value: Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) that offer more than just a basic experience of sensation. They offer	Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are at basic level only and adds little to play value. E.g. basic swings, climbing frame springer, roundabout.		Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are more than basic and adds to play value, but does not do so significantly e.g., tyre swings, some water features, some limited		Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are advanced in nature and add significantly to play value e.g. loose parts, places to hide/for reverie, good integration and use of natural environment, a range of textures, planting, use of contours,

TYPE A: Doorstep space or facility					
For Type A assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
possibilities for children to take risks without hazards, to intensify the experience or broaden it.			challenge.		challenging, risk, cooperation needed, and attention paid to all the senses.
CARE AND MAINTENANCE					
Well maintained	Extensive litter or hazardous debris, planting in poor condition, graffiti present		Partly meets criteria for excellence but fails on two or more items		No evidence of litter or hazardous items, well drained, planting is kept in good order and trimmed regularly, no graffiti
Health and safety (May require desk research)	No programme of regular maintenance and safety checks		Appropriate adherence to health and safety standards but maintenance and safety checks on an ad hoc basis		Regular inspection for unexpected hazards; regular cleaning and general maintenance programmes; dog-free areas; traffic calming; meet agreed safety standards, regular risk assessment, regular inspection regimes, regular maintenance programmes, as appropriate.
Seating for adults	No seating for adults		Limited seating or seating is not well sited for observing		Adults can sit and observe children

TYPE A: Doorstep space or facility					
For Type A assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
			play		playing
Litter bins	No litter bins/ bins in poor condition, or bins are full		One bin, not full and in adequate condition.		One or more bins in good condition and not full
Dog free zones	Dogs have unrestricted access to the whole site/ evidence of dog fouling		Measures taken to exclude dogs but evidence that dogs are entering site.		Management of dog fouling in place through bins, area is protected preventing dog access, dogs excluded, signs discouraging dogs from the site, no evidence of fouling

Score between one and five with one as the lowest score and five as the highest score 0 if absent.

TYPE B: Neighbourhood space or facility	
For Type B assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.	
	Score

DRAFT PLAY INDICATORS EVALUATION REPORT

	1	2	3	4	5
INVOLVMENT OF CHILDREN					
Were children involved in the development of the site? (This score is for your own use only. It will not be counted in the final score).	Children were not consulted on any aspect of the development of the site.		Children were consulted about the development of the site once.		Children were consulted continuously and participated actively in the design and development process throughout.
LOCATION					
Proximity to housing	Site is located in an isolated area, far from housing or community buildings		Site is located reasonably close to housing		Site within 400 metres walking distance of housing or community buildings
Well used by children	Site is used by few or no children at whom it is aimed. There is no evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass and marks left by children		Site has a reasonable level of use by those children at whom it is aimed		Site is well used by children. There is evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass and marks left by children
Informal oversight	Site has obstructed lines of sight, few passers by at any time		Site has some informal oversight by adults but passers by are few, or only at certain times		Site has a good level of informal oversight by adults, for example views are unobstructed, site is in an area with people frequently passing by or through it
Getting there	Site is on opposite side of a major access barrier for the		Children can get to the site from home or school but		Children can get to the site easily, safely and independently from their

TYPE B: Neighbourhood space or facility					
For Type B assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
	majority of children who would hope to use it		need to take a circuitous route or cross a busy road to get there and the site has limited access by footpath or cycle route		homes or school for example: Footpaths or cycle routes pass the site. No need to cross major barriers (e.g. busy roads) to access site.
Personal safety, security and lighting	Site and access routes feel unsafe even in day light		Site and access routes feel safe in daylight but not after dark		Site and access routes feel safe at all times and have good exit routes. Both are well lit after dark if open.
Physical /mobility access to the site	One or more groups of children are excluded by poor access; site is not readily accessible to buggies. Poor pathways to the site, uneven ground, steps, sudden changes to surfacing are not highlighted.		Site can be accessed by some e.g. those pushing buggies and children with some mobility, but presents difficulties for others e.g. those with severe impairments, so that they cannot take full advantage of the facility.		Space is accessible for children with different abilities, behaviours, and sensory capabilities. Site is accessible to buggies. Good pathways to the site, even ground and no steps. Entrances and sudden changes in surfaces are highlighted.
Meeting other children	Site located where no other children likely <u>to pass by</u> e.g. away from homes, hidden away.		Site located where there may some opportunity for other children <u>to pass by</u> e.g. a quieter road.		Site located where there is a very high likelihood of other children <u>passing by</u> and joining in play e.g. on the way to and from school or local

TYPE B: Neighbourhood space or facility					
For Type B assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
					shops
PLAY VALUE					
Enticing to children to play	Signs prohibiting children from playing e.g. no ball games, no children; unappealing, tired, lacking in warmth		Children have restricted access, or are limited in what they can do by regulation or by-law. Site locked when children may wish to play.		Visible welcome to children, colourful, child-friendly and appealing. Children and adults feel relaxed (if observed) and at ease.
Play features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) – quantity and range	Very few play features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offers four or less of the following possible experiences or sensations for children: Swinging Sliding		A limited number of features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offering at least six of the following possible experiences or sensations for children Swinging Sliding		A sufficient number of features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offering at least eight of the following possible experiences or sensations for children Swinging Sliding Climbing

TYPE B: Neighbourhood space or facility					
For Type B assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Climbing Rotating Rocking Overhead Balance Imaginative Play Wheeled areas Ball games		Climbing Rotating Rocking Overhead Balance Imaginative Play Wheeled areas Ball games		Rotating Rocking Overhead Balance Imaginative Play Wheeled areas Ball games
Meets play needs of different ages	Play features meet the play needs of only one age range.		Play features suitable for two different ages.		Play features meet the play needs of all ages up to teenagers.
Movement (see definition of “site” above)	Site offers few features that enable running, tumbling, rolling or moving around		Site offers a limited opportunity for movement		Children can run, tumble, roll, and freely move around.
Ball games	No space for ball games or ball games prohibited		Ball games area but no markings, limited equipment, or too small a space for more than one		Ball games area marked out and equipped for a range of ball games, for more than one group of children at one time, not too close to other

TYPE B: Neighbourhood space or facility					
For Type B assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
			group of children		play equipment
Access to natural environment	Planting is minimal; features do not encourage encounters (e.g. rose bushes); no variety of environment, or level, few or no stimuli to senses		Limited provision for encounters with natural environment; space does not promote use of natural environment in play		Site provides encounters with trees, bushes, plants, shrubs, wild flowers and long grass; natural features such as sand, water or rocks, and a variety of levels; and a range of visual and sensory stimuli. There is opportunity to use the natural environment in play.
Seating for children	No places for children to sit		Limited places for children to sit, not suitable for playing together or for table games		Children can sit and play together, places for children to sit are incorporated into the play space, and near to tables or other seated play surfaces
Play opportunities for disabled children.	Site offers little or nothing for children with sensory or physical impairments.		Limited play offer to children with physical or sensory impairments. Disabled children do not play with non-disabled children.		All features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) for play are fully accessible to children with different abilities, behaviour, sensory or physical impairments. Disabled and non-disabled children are able to play together.

TYPE B: Neighbourhood space or facility					
For Type B assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
Added play value: Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) that offer more than just a basic experience of sensation. They offer possibilities for children to take risks without hazards, to intensify the experience or broaden it.	Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are at basic level only and adds little to play value. E.g. basic swings, climbing frame springer, roundabout.		Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are more than basic and adds to play value, but does not do so significantly e.g., tyre swings, some water features, some limited challenge.		Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are advanced in nature and add significantly to play value e.g. basket Dutch disc/cantilever, wooden sculptures, integration and use of the natural environment, risk, challenge and sometimes require cooperation, streams/or water play features, extensive sand play area, music and sound and loose parts, places to hide/for reverie, a range of textures, planting, use of contours, cooperation needed.
CARE AND MAINTENANCE					
Well maintained	Extensive litter or hazardous debris, planting in poor condition, graffiti present		Partly meets criteria for excellence but fails on two or more items		No evidence of litter or hazardous items, well drained, planting is kept in good order and trimmed regularly, no graffiti
Health and safety (May	No programme of regular maintenance and safety		Appropriate adherence to health and safety standards		Regular inspection for unexpected hazards; regular cleaning and

TYPE B: Neighbourhood space or facility					
For Type B assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
require desk research)	checks		but maintenance and safety checks on an ad hoc basis		general maintenance programmes; dog-free areas; traffic calming; meet agreed safety standards, regular risk assessment, regular inspection regimes, regular maintenance programmes, as appropriate.
Seating for adults	No seating for adults		Limited seating or seating is not well sited for observing play		Adults can sit and observe children playing
Litter bins	No litter bins/ bins in poor condition, or bins are full		One bin, not full and in adequate condition.		Two or more bins in good condition and not full
Dog free zones	Dogs have unrestricted access to the whole site/ evidence of dog fouling		Measures taken to exclude dogs but evidence that dogs are entering site.		Management of dog fouling in place through bins, area is protected preventing dog access, dogs excluded, signs discouraging dogs from the site, no evidence of fouling
Presence of trusted adults (e.g. park keepers, street wardens, play rangers,	No supervisory adults in the vicinity when children likely to be playing		Supervisory adults in the vicinity at some times children might want to be playing		Supervisory adults always likely to be in the vicinity present at times children might want to be playing.

TYPE B: Neighbourhood space or facility					
For Type B assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area within and outside any fenced dedicated play areas.					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
community support officers etc)					
Toilets	Restricted use of toilets. Toilet poorly maintained. No accessible toilets.		Toilets available and adequately maintained, but not easily accessible, e.g. too far away or locked when children wish to use them		Fully accessible, well maintained toilets available for children and adults whilst at the site.

Score between one and five with one as the lowest score and five as the highest score 0 if absent.

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
INVOLVMENT OF					

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
CHILDREN					
Were children involved in the development of the site? (This score is for your own use only. It will not be counted in the final score).	Children were not consulted on any aspect of the development of the site.		Children were consulted about the development of the site once.		Children were consulted continuously and participated actively in the design and development process throughout.
LOCATION					
Proximity to housing	Site is located in an isolated area, far from housing or community buildings		Site is located reasonably close to housing		Site within 1000 metres walking distance of housing or community buildings
Well used by children	Site is used by few or no children at whom it is aimed. There is no evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass and marks left by children		Site has a reasonable level of use by those children at whom it is aimed		Site is well used by children. There is evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass and marks left by children
Informal oversight	Site has obstructed lines of sight, few passers by at any		Site has some informal oversight by adults but		Site has a good level of informal oversight by adults, for example

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
	time		passers by are few, or only at certain times		views are unobstructed, site is in an area with people frequently passing by or through it
Getting there	Site is on opposite side of a major access barrier for the majority of children who would hope to use it		Children can get to the site from home or school but need to take a circuitous route or cross a busy road to get there and the site has limited access by footpath or cycle route		Children can get to the site easily, safely and independently from their homes or school for example: Footpaths or cycle routes pass the site. No need to cross major barriers (e.g. busy roads) to access site.
Personal safety, security and lighting	Site and access routes feel unsafe even in day light		Site and access routes feel safe in daylight but not after dark		Site and access routes feel safe at all times and have good exit routes. Both are well lit after dark if open.
Physical /mobility access to the site	One or more groups of children are excluded by poor access; site is not readily accessible to buggies. Poor pathways to the site, uneven ground, steps, sudden changes to surfacing are not		Site can be accessed by some e.g. those pushing buggies and children with some mobility, but presents difficulties for others e.g. those with severe impairments, so that they cannot take full advantage		Space is accessible for children with different abilities, behaviours, and sensory capabilities. Site is accessible to buggies. Good pathways to the site, even ground and no steps. Entrances and sudden changes in surfaces are highlighted.

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
	highlighted.		of the facility.		
Meeting other children	Site located where no other children likely to pass by e.g. away from homes, hidden away.		Site located where there may some opportunity for other children to pass by e.g. a quieter road.		Site located where there is a very high likelihood of other children passing by and joining in play e.g. on the way to and from school or local shops
PLAY VALUE					
Enticing to children to play	Signs prohibiting children from playing e.g. no ball games, no children; unappealing, tired, lacking in warmth		Children have restricted access, or are limited in what they can do by regulation or by-law. Site locked when children may wish to play.		Visible welcome to children, colourful, child-friendly and appealing. Children and adults feel relaxed (if observed) and at ease.
Play features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) – quantity and range	Very few play features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offers four or less of the following possible experiences or		A limited number of features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offering at least seven of the following possible experiences or		A sufficient number of features that allow for different sensations (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) offering at all of the following possible experiences or sensations for children

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
	sensations for children: Swinging Sliding Climbing Rotating Rocking Overhead Balance Imaginative Play Wheeled areas Ball games		sensations for children Swinging Sliding Climbing Rotating Rocking Overhead Balance Imaginative Play Wheeled areas Ball games		Swinging Sliding Climbing Rotating Rocking Overhead Balance Imaginative Play Wheeled areas Ball games
Meets play needs of different ages	Play features meet the play needs of only one age range.		Play features suitable for two different ages.		Play features meet the play needs of all ages up to teenagers.
Movement (see definition of “site”)	Site offers few features that enable running, tumbling,		Site offers a limited opportunity for movement		Children can run, tumble roll, and freely move around using their whole

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
above)	wheeled activity, rolling or moving around				bodies or on wheels.
Ball games	No space for ball games or ball games prohibited		Ball games area but no markings, limited equipment, or too small a space for more than one group of children		Ball games area marked out and equipped for a range of ball games, for more than one group of children at one time, not too close to other play equipment
Access to natural environment	Planting is minimal; features do not encourage encounters (e.g. rose bushes); no variety of environment, or level, few or no stimuli to senses		Limited provision for encounters with natural environment; space does not promote use of natural environment in play		Site provides encounters with trees, bushes, plants, shrubs, wild flowers and long grass; natural features such as sand, water or rocks, and a variety of levels; and a range of visual and sensory stimuli. There is opportunity to use the natural environment in play.
Seating for children	No places for children to sit		Limited places for children to sit, not suitable for playing together or for table games		Children can sit and play together, places for children to sit are incorporated into the play space, and near to tables or other seated play surfaces

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
Play opportunities for disabled children.	Site offers little or nothing for children with sensory or physical impairments.		Limited play offer to children with physical or sensory impairments. Disabled children do not play with non-disabled children.		All features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) for play are fully accessible to children with different abilities, behaviour, sensory or physical impairments. Disabled and non-disabled children are able to play together.
Added play value: Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) that offer more than just a basic experience of sensation. They offer possibilities for children to take risks without hazards, to intensify the experience or broaden it.	Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are at basic level only and adds little to play value. E.g. basic swings, climbing frame springer, roundabout.		Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are more than basic and adds to play value, but does not do so significantly e.g., tyre swings, some water features, some limited challenge.		Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are advanced in nature and add significantly to play value e.g. basket Dutch disc/cantilever, wooden sculptures, integration and use of the natural environment, risk, challenge and sometimes require cooperation, streams/or water play features, extensive sand play area, music and sound and loose parts, places to hide/for reverie, a range of textures, planting, use of contours, cooperation needed.

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
CARE AND MAINTENANCE					
Well maintained	Extensive litter or hazardous debris, planting in poor condition, graffiti present		Partly meets criteria for excellence but fails on two or more items		No evidence of litter or hazardous items, well drained, planting is kept in good order and trimmed regularly, no graffiti
Health and safety (May require desk research)	No programme of regular maintenance and safety checks		Appropriate adherence to health and safety standards but maintenance and safety checks on an ad hoc basis		Regular inspection for unexpected hazards; regular cleaning and general maintenance programmes; dog-free areas; traffic calming; meet agreed safety standards, regular risk assessment, regular inspection regimes, regular maintenance programmes, as appropriate.
Seating for adults	No seating for adults		Limited seating or seating is not well sited for observing play		Adults can sit and observe children playing
Litter bins	No litter bins/ bins in poor condition, or bins are full		One bin, not full and in adequate condition.		Two or more bins in good condition and not full
Dog free zones	Dogs have unrestricted		Measures taken to exclude		Management of dog fouling in place

TYPE C: Local space of facility					
For Type C assessment, <i>Site</i> is defined the area dedicated for play, inside and outside of any fenced area					
	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
	access to the whole site/ evidence of dog fouling		dogs but evidence that dogs are entering site.		through bins, area is protected preventing dog access, dogs excluded, signs discouraging dogs from the site, no evidence of fouling
Presence of trusted adults (e.g. park keepers, street wardens, play rangers, community support officers etc)	No supervisory adults in the vicinity when children likely to be playing		Supervisory adults in the vicinity at some times children might want to be playing		Supervisory adults always likely to be in the vicinity present at times children might want to be playing.
Toilets	Restricted use of toilets. Toilet poorly maintained. No accessible toilets.		Toilets available, but inaccessible and adequately maintained.		Fully accessible, well maintained toilets available for children and adults whilst at the site.

SUPERVISED AND SEMI-SUPERVISED PROVISION					
Registration with Ofsted and subject to regular inspection (if	Not registered or low score		Medium score in Ofsted inspection		High score in Ofsted Inspection

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applicable)				
Use of Quality Assurance (QA) scheme or other system for monitoring and continuous performance improvement	No QA or other type of scheme		Use of generic QA scheme or system for continuous improvement	Use of play centred QA scheme or system for continuous improvement incorporating the seven Best Play Objectives
Level of achievement in QA or other appropriate scheme	No QA or other scheme		Achieved intermediate level of QA scheme or system for continuous improvement	Achieved highest level of QA scheme or system for continuous improvement incorporate seven Best Play Objectives

Date	Time	Weather
Name of assessor	Venue	

Definitions of scores: score between 5 and 1 with 5 highest and 0 absent

5	Excellent	2	Weaknesses, improvements needed
4	Good	1	Serious weaknesses, improvement needed
3	OK, average, not high priority to improve	0	Absent

Involvement of children score		Comments:
--------------------------------------	--	------------------

Location	Score	Comments
Proximity to housing		
Well used by children		
Informal oversight		
Getting there		
Lighting, security and personal safety		
Physical/Mobility		
Meeting other children		
TOTAL		

Play value	Score	Comments
Enticing to children to play		
Play features		
Movement		
Ball games		
Seating for children		
Play opportunities for disabled children		
Added play value		
TOTAL		

Care and maintenance	Score	Comments
Well maintained		

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Health and safety		
Seating for adults		
Litter bins		
Dog free zones		
TOTAL		

Comments

Date	Time	Weather
Name of assessor	Venue	

Definitions of scores: score between 5 and 1 with 5 highest and 0 absent

5	Excellent	2	Weaknesses, improvements needed
4	Good	1	Serious weaknesses, improvement needed
3	OK, average, not high priority to improve	0	Absent

Involvement of children score		Comments:
--------------------------------------	--	------------------

Location	Score	Comments
Proximity to housing		
Well used by children		
Informal oversight		
Getting there		
Lighting, security and personal safety		
Physical/Mobility		
Meeting other children		
TOTAL		

Play value	Score	Comments
Enticing to children to play		
Play features		
Play needs of different ages		
Movement		
Ball games		
Access to the natural environment		
Seating for children		
Play opportunities for disabled children		
Added play value		
TOTAL		

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Care and maintenance	Score	Comments
Well maintained		
Health and safety		
Seating for adults		
Litter bins		
Dog free zones		
Presence of supervisory adults		
Toilets		
TOTAL		

Comments

Date	Time	Weather
Name of assessor	Venue	

Definitions of scores: score between 5 and 1 with 5 highest and 0 absent

5	Excellent	2	Weaknesses, improvements needed
4	Good	1	Serious weaknesses, improvement needed
3	OK, average, not high priority to improve	0	Absent

Involvement of children score		Comments:
--------------------------------------	--	------------------

Location	Score	Comments
Proximity to housing		
Well used by children		
Informal oversight		
Getting there		
Lighting, security and personal safety		
Physical/Mobility		
Meeting other children		
TOTAL		

Play value	Score	Comments
Enticing to children to play		
Play features		
Play needs of different ages		
Movement		
Ball games		
Access to the natural environment		
Seating for children		
Play opportunities for disabled children		
Added play value		
TOTAL		

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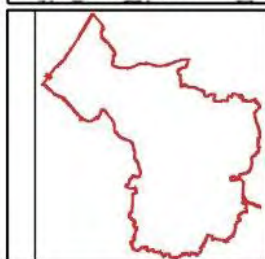
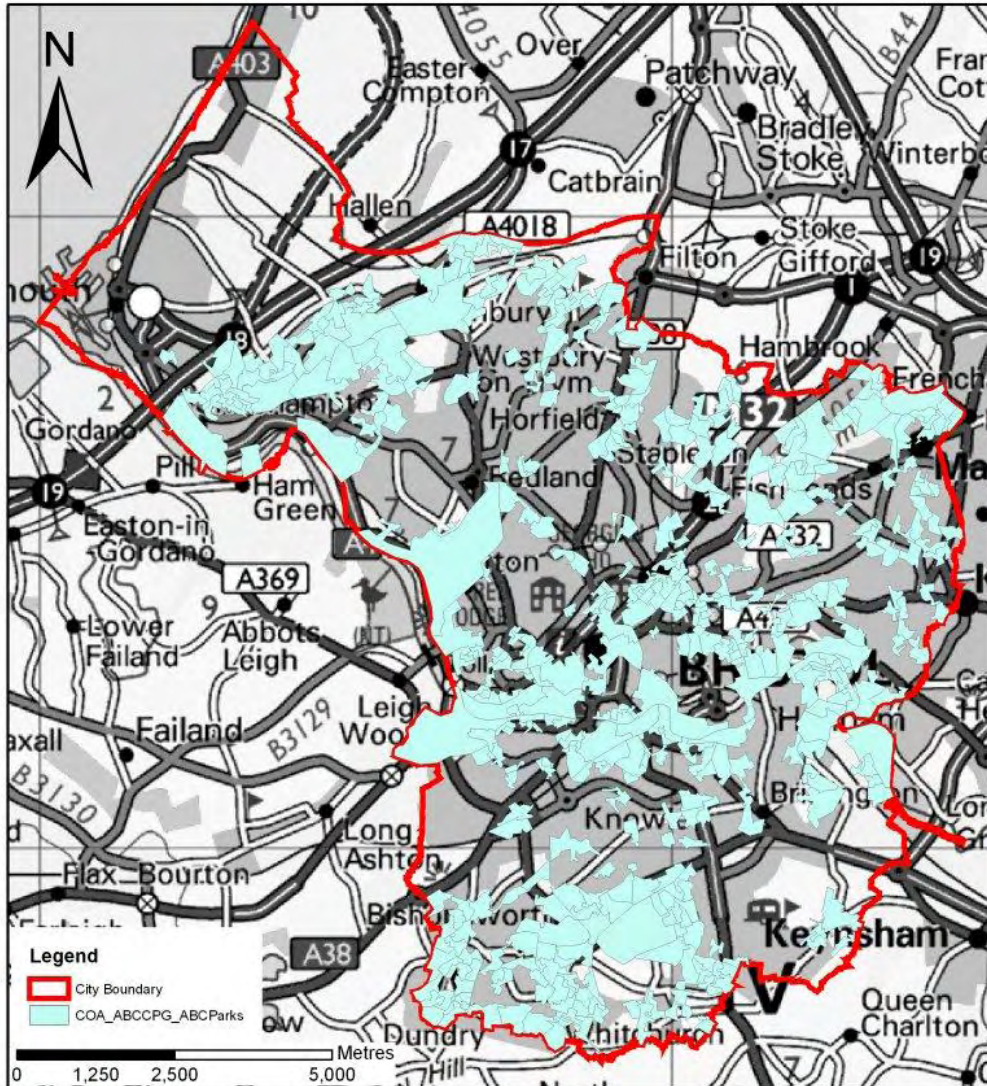
Care and maintenance	Score	Comments
Well maintained		
Health and safety		
Seating for adults		
Litter bins		
Dog free zones		
Presence of supervisory adults		
Toilets		
TOTAL		

Comments

APPENDIX II

ACCESS INDICATOR MAPS

Bristol Maps



Subject: Childrens Paly KPI Pilot - Population Ouput Areas

Date: 26/02/2007

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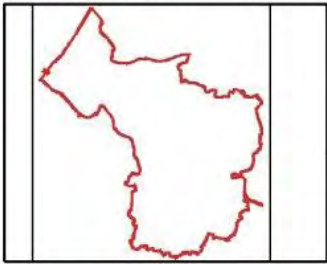
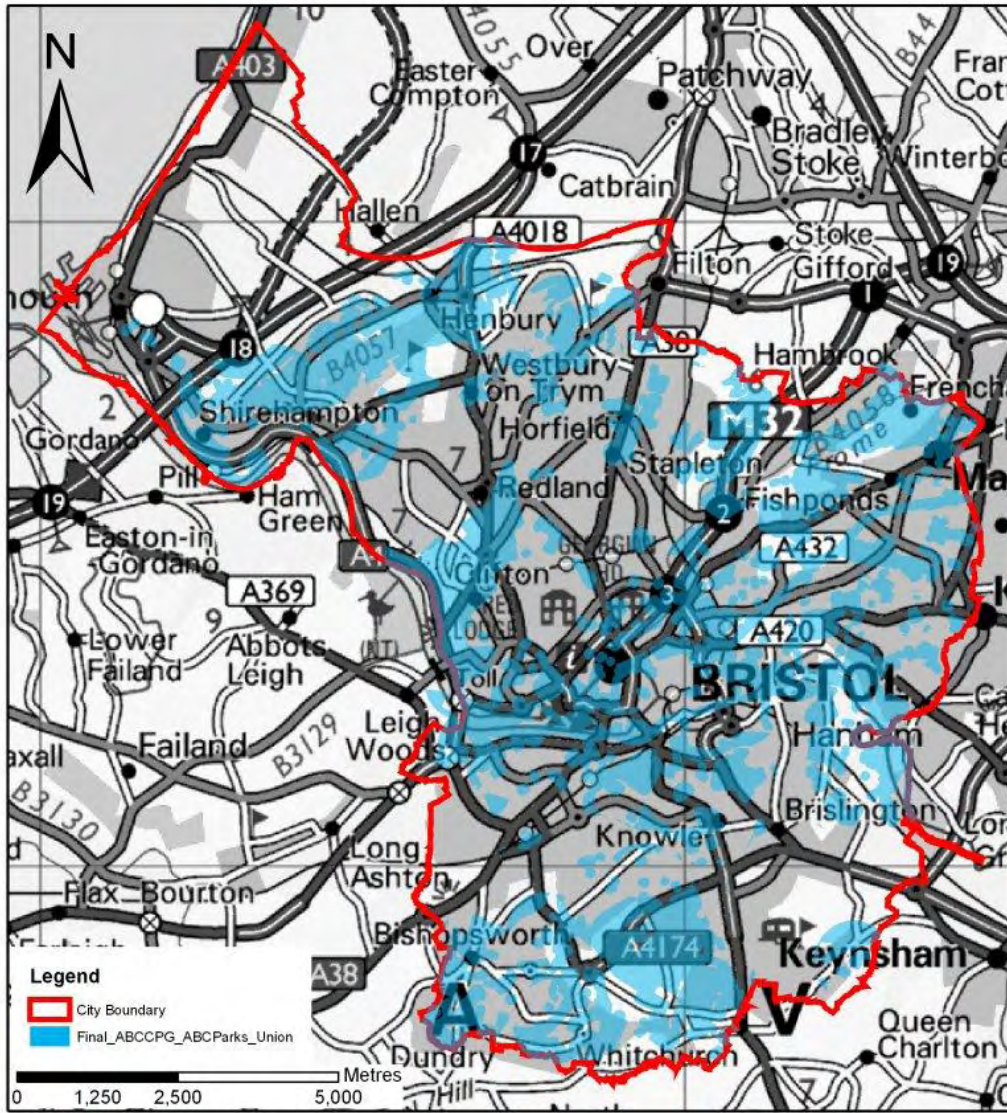


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Bristol Parks, Culture and Leisure



Subject: Childrens Play KPI - Three Sites and CPG Buffers

Date: 26/02/2007

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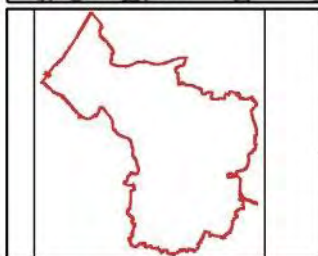
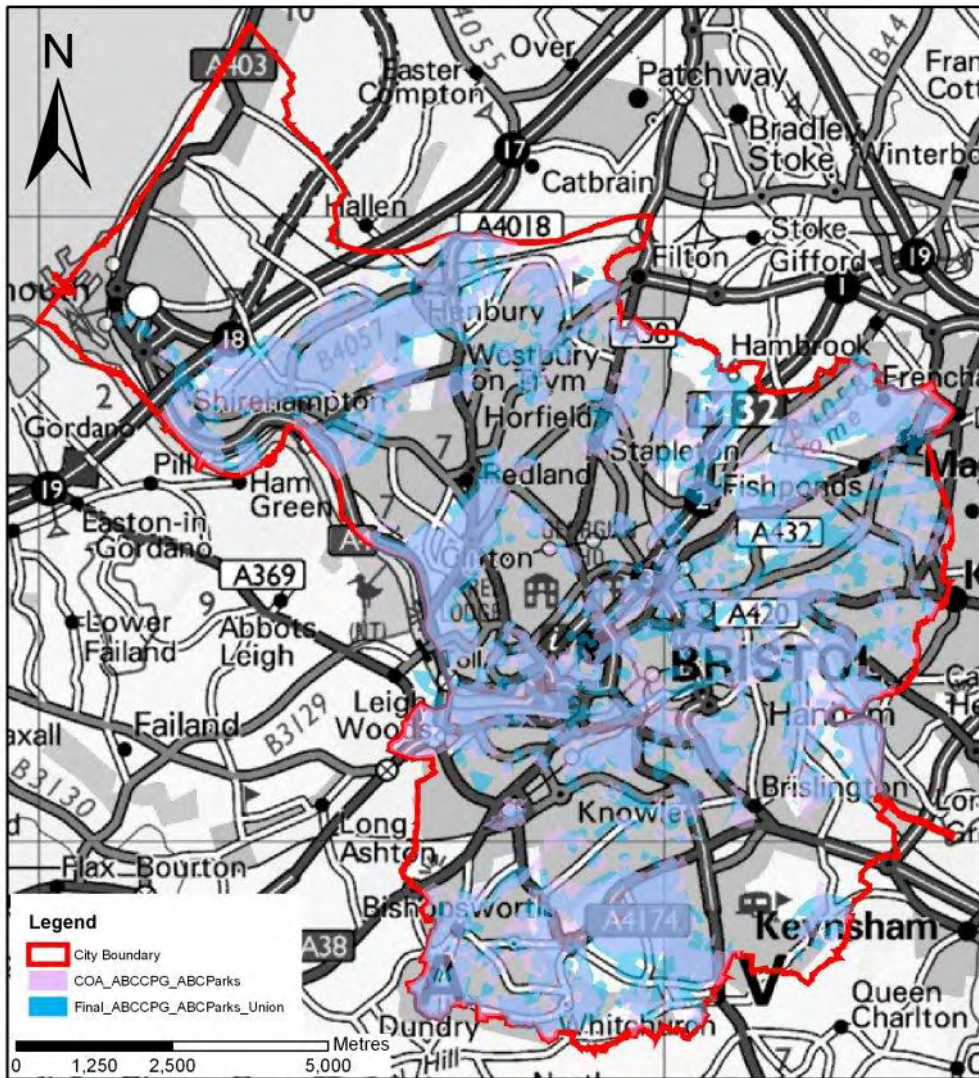
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Bristol Parks, Culture and Leisure



Subject: Childrens Play KPI - Sites and Population OA

Date: 26/02/2007

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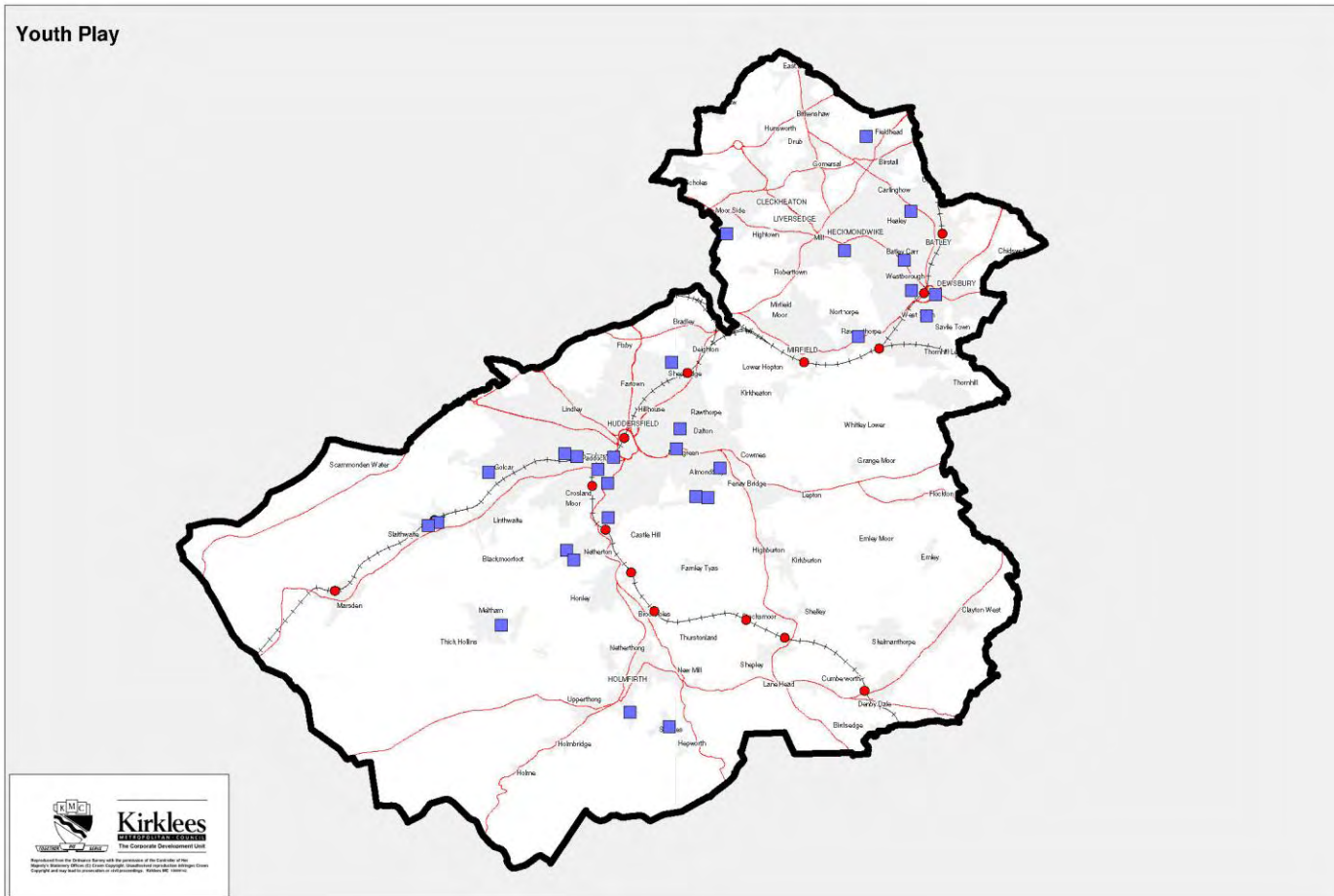
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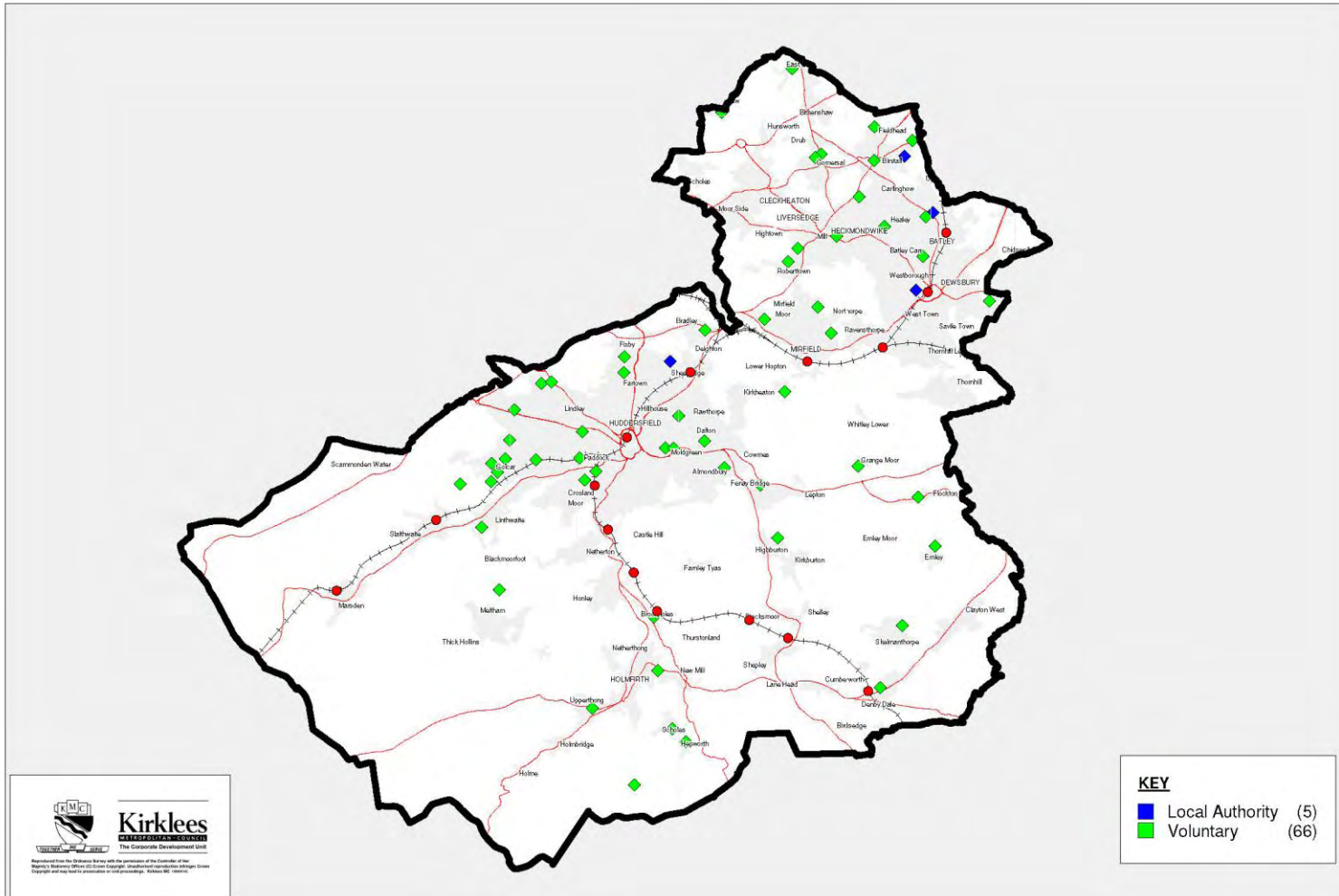
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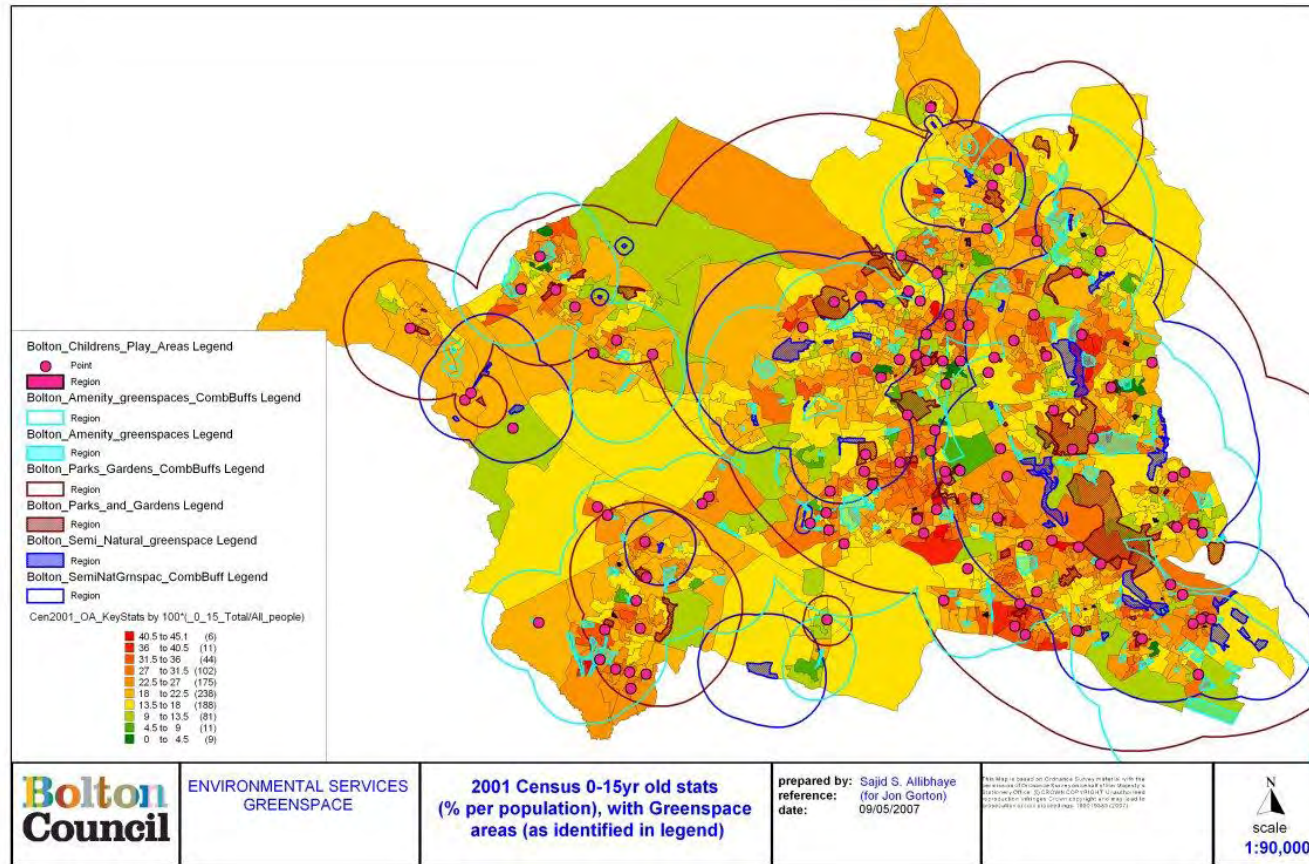
Kirklees Maps



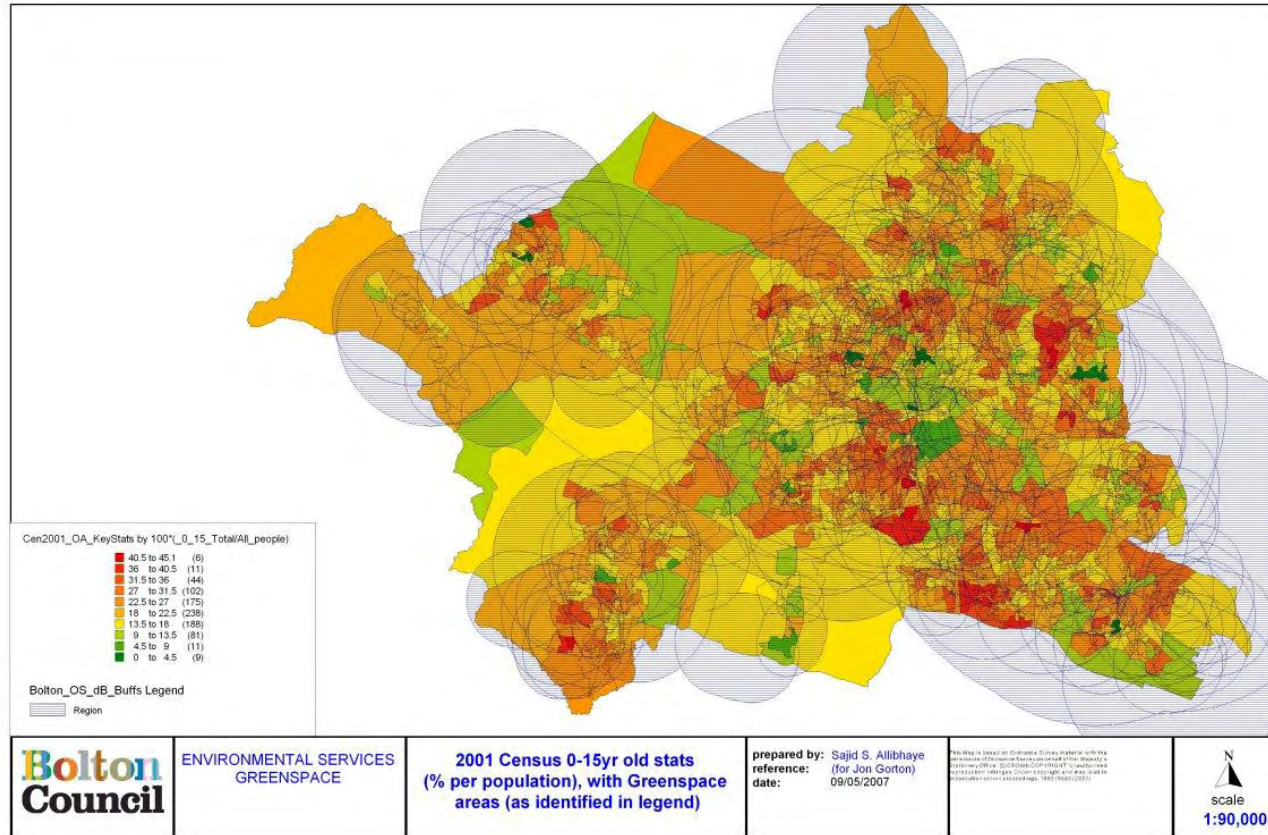
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Bolton Maps

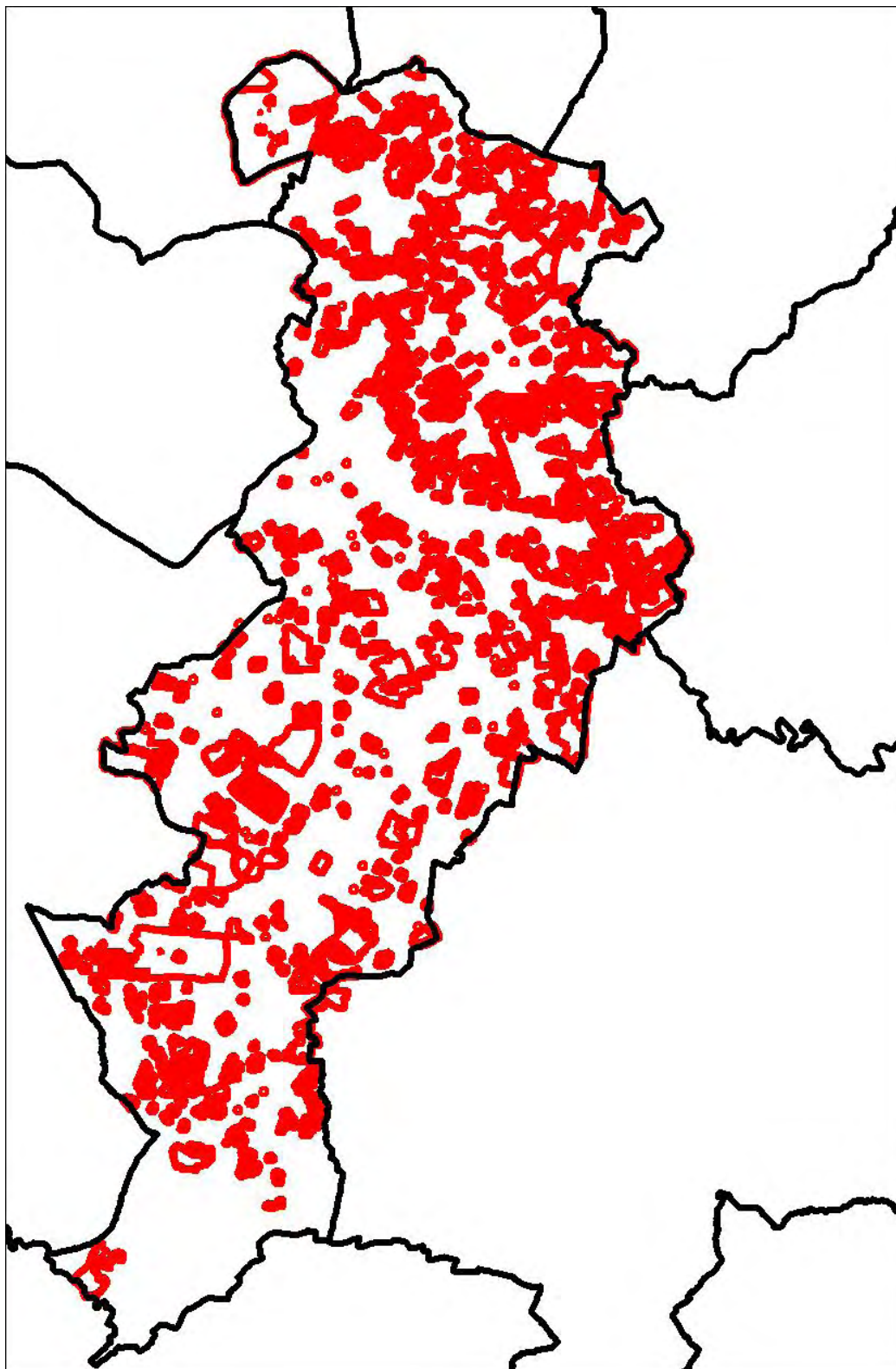


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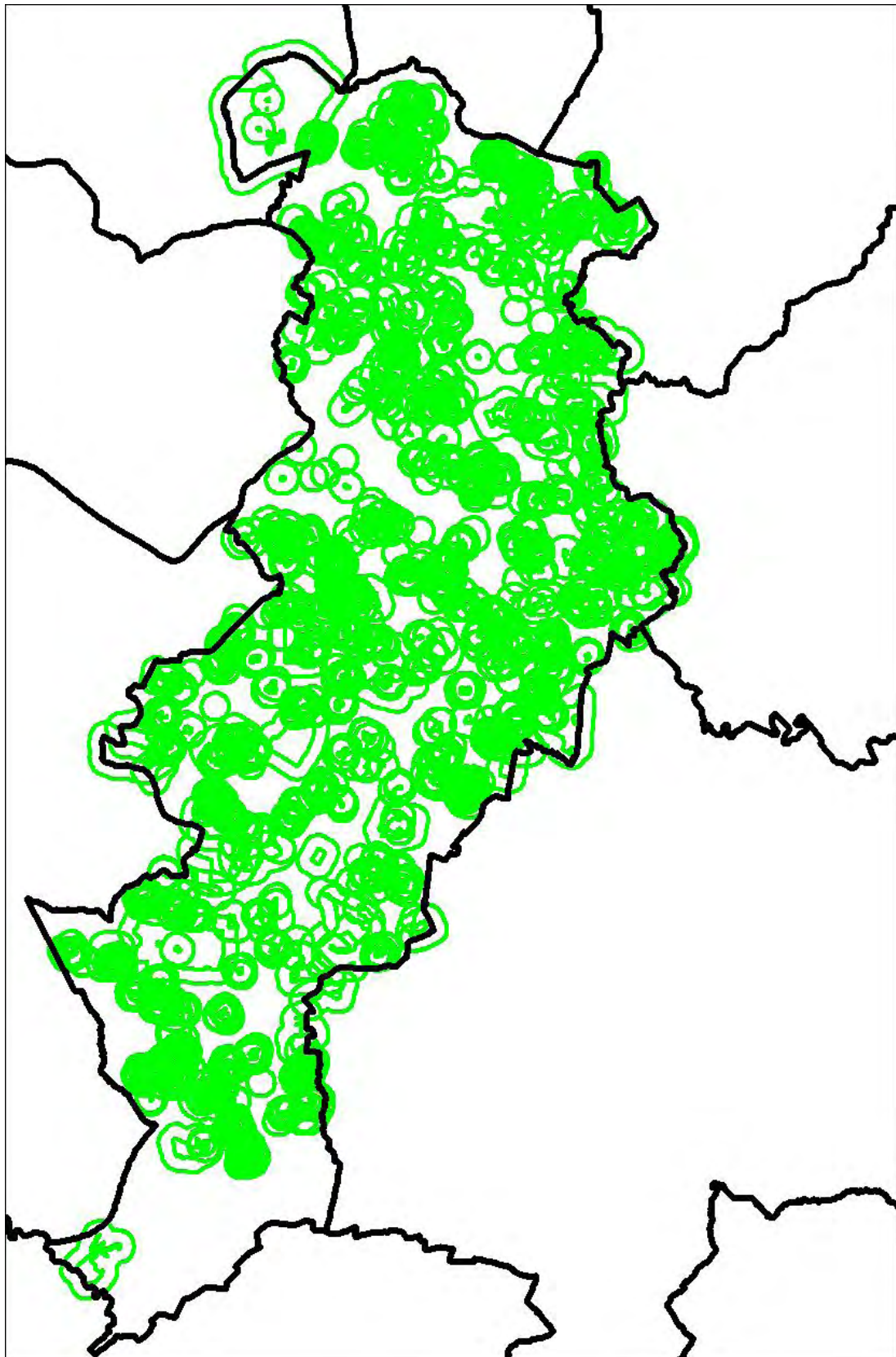


Manchester Maps

Map 1: 60m Buffers



Map2: 240m Buffers



Map 3: 600m Buffers

