

Patchway Town Council Play Policy

Background

Patchway Town Council acknowledges that changes in childhood have had a significant impact on children and young people's ability to experience rich and varied social outdoor play opportunities near to their homes. The reasons for these changes in childhood include; increased traffic, fear of crime, growth in a risk-averse culture and growth in electronic entertainment. The effects of these changes on children are loss of freedom of movement, less time to play and a decline in access to environments suitable for informal play and recreation. The Council also recognises a decline in tolerance of the presence of children and young people playing in public space and a progressive disappearance of children from the public realm with each generation.

Justification

The Council believes that children's ability to play in public places near to their homes is good for children and beneficial to their communities and that this sharing of space requires respect and tolerance on both sides. However particular allowances must be made for children and tolerance expected from adults as children are still learning and adults should be expected to have a greater degree of maturity.

The Council endorses the United Nations Charter for the Rights of the Child Article 31 which upholds 'play recreation and leisure' as rights for children. As representatives of the whole community, Council members acknowledge that children and young people have no vote and so are particularly dependant on adults to advocate for their rights and needs.

Commitment

The Council commits to take this policy into account whenever decisions are made which may have an impact on children's ability to play.

Policy Values and Principles

What is Play?

Play is what children choose to do when everyone else has stopped telling them what to do.

Play is activity which is freely chosen by the child and motivated by the child, it may be active or passive, have an obvious outcome-or none, may be social or solitary. The drive to play is innate in all children and play provides the mechanism for children to learn and practice many of the lessons of life which cannot be taught.

The Benefit of Play to the Children of Patchway

The Council believes that social outdoor play in the public places of Patchway has great benefits to children and to the community. Play is one of the best forms of exercise, it enables children to explore where they live, to experience freedom and develop independence and confidence. Playing is an important way for children to form friendships and often allows adults to meet and make new connections and friends. This helps to build a healthier stronger sense of community in Patchway.

Quality Play Environments

Whenever they are given the chance, children seek out and explore the potential for play in any environment. Places which are wild and increase children's sense of independence from adults are especially appealing. In their play children particularly want to alter, change and adapt their surroundings.

This policy commits the Council to creating, developing and maintaining public places which integrate children and young people and meets their needs. These needs include some places that are designated specifically for the use of children and young people. When this is the case the Council will be informed by current good practice especially the criteria and principles set out in Play England's 'Designs for Play'.

Play and Risk

An essential part of the process of play is the constant exploration of possibilities and boundaries. In order to learn and change children must be able to try out experiences which are new to them and this must involve some degree of risk. The Council believes that if children are over protected from risk they will not get the rich play experiences they need and want, and they will not develop the necessary skill they will need to manage their own risks in future.

The Council formally adopts the Play Safety Forum's 'Statement on Managing Risk in Play Provision' and will adopt a balanced risk/benefit approach in its decisions on play following good practice guidance set out in Managing Risk in Play – The Implementation Guide (DCSF/Play England 2009).

Adopted by Patchway Town Council
8.2.2011.