



Evaluation of Bristol Play Pathfinder Programme

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Evaluation of PlayPathfinder programme (Bristol)

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Key findings of the evaluation of Bristol Play Pathfinder programme

Access and inclusion	
Accessibility of Play spaces	In average, 96 % of participants strongly agreed and fairly agreed that the new play areas are welcoming A high percentage of respondents (96%) concurred that the play space is accessible by foot and by bike 78.9% of respondents strongly or fairly agreed that the new play areas/parks are clean and well maintained
Adaptability of access in relation to usage	Most respondents (94.6%) agreed that children could easily find their way around the play area 89.5% agreed that the new play area allows children and young people of different ages to play together
Degree of success of inclusiveness	
Success in engaging hard to reach groups through proactive work	Most respondents (65.8%) agreed that the play areas are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children 43.7% of respondents agreed that the play areas offered provision for children with disabilities to participate successfully in their play
Ethnic minorities	68.5% of participants were positive that the play areas attract children and parents from ethnic minority background
Risk, safety and play	
Role of formal and informal supervision	The results showed that 62% of respondents strongly and fairly agreed that the design of the play areas facilitate informal supervision from nearby houses and roads 60.4% of participants were positive about the ability of the play areas to offer a variety of on-site adults' supervision. 54.7% of respondents were convinced that if the areas were staffed by play workers, it will increase the feeling of safety.
Provision of safe 'hanging out' place for young people	An average 61.5% of participants stated that their reason for using their local park is for children play, followed by walking, dog walking, socialising and hanging out
Impact on anti-social behaviour and vandalism	36% of respondents believed that the improvements have helped to reduce anti-social behaviour
Addressing parental safety concerns	Almost 87% of respondent believed that the play equipment in the play areas is safe 95.1% of respondents believed that the play areas are safe from traffic
Contribution of play rangers and voluntary groups	
	27.7% of respondents agreed that play rangers provide open access play sessions in the parks
Usage and perceptions of play areas	
Degree of playability of play spaces	93.3% of respondents were positive about the good balance between play equipment and space for free play 92.7% strongly or fairly agree that the design of play areas makes good use of natural elements 91.8% of participants were in agreement that the materials used in the new playgrounds added to their quality 80.4% of respondents concur that the play areas have a flexible layout that allows for future modification and development 83.8% of respondents were in agreement that their children enjoyed playing in the New Playground 82.5% of participants agreed that the play areas are versatile and meets children's needs 77.6% of respondents were positive about the play areas for allowing a wide range of play experiences 79.4% of participants confirmed that the play areas are used by the community and visitors 69.2% of participants confirmed that their child played more often in the new playgrounds Over 82% of respondents were in agreement that it improved the character of the local neighbourhood 30% of respondents were in agreement that local people involvement in the process has helped to achieve improved respect for the play area 69% of respondents confirmed that the play areas are used most days of the week
Social interaction and play	
Making new friends	Over 46% of parents reported that their child made a new friend as a result of the improvements
Physical activity and Play	
Duration of play	Over 58% of children met the minimum requirements of 30 min for moderate to vigorous physical activity
Cost benefit analysis	
	Total value of the health benefits of play in the Play Pathfinder areas is estimated to £1,447.875
Children and Community engagement	
Effectiveness of community's consultation	24% of respondents agreed that consultation process on the design of the play areas was effective Over 16% of respondents confirmed that their comments on whether the play areas met their needs were listened to and valued
Success in developing local ownership	
	Over 70% of participants agreed that the improvements led to a clear feeling of ownership for the play area by children and adults

Executive summary

Background

- 1.1. The Youth and Play Services (YPS) and Bristol Parks Services (BPS) at Bristol City Council appointed UWE, Bristol to undertake an independent study of the Play Pathfinder programme. The research sought to determine the impact of Bristol City Council's play strategy, design and innovation on children's quality of play, health, and well-being. It also assessed the effects of the programme on families and the wider community, including intergeneration relationships. Based on the evidence, the research will inform further developments of 'Playing for Real' and 'Parks and Green Space Strategy'.
- 1.2. The research presented in this report is based on mixed method approach, involving in depth face-to-face interviews and questionnaires with parents, children and community in four case-study areas. The study also entailed the use of child friendly techniques to engage children and determine their responses to the improvements. Non intrusive observation techniques were also used to establish children's quality of play in the study areas. Workshops and focus groups with key stakeholders from community groups were undertaken. As such, findings of this research provide useful insights into the perceptions, views and experiences of parents, children and local community.

Key findings of the evaluation of the Play Pathfinder programme in Bristol

Access and inclusion

- 1.3. Strong evidence (96.6% of respondents) points to the positive effects of the Play Pathfinder in making the play areas more welcoming and better accessible by foot and by bicycle. There are also positive effects of the Pathfinder programme in making the new play environments cleaner and well maintained. Over 65% of respondents confirmed that the Bristol Play Pathfinder areas were more accessible for disabled and non-disabled children, thus meeting National indicator 140 (Tackling exclusion and promoting quality). However, only 43.7% of participants agreed with the statement that the play areas offer provision for children with disabilities to participate successfully in their play.

Risk, safety and play

- 1.4. Most participants (96%) were in agreement that the new play area offered a variety of on-site adults' supervision and that the design of the play areas has facilitated informal supervision from nearby houses and roads. However, there were mixed responses amongst users of Oldbury Court. Oldbury Court is primarily a destination park and therefore may be difficult to locate the new play area to facilitate informal supervision. In addition, as the park attracts a variety of users from a large catchment area, the presence of strangers may be perceived as a potential danger to children, rather than a contribution to children's safety. The role of play workers and voluntary groups to safety is an important consideration. In most cases, it was felt that if the play areas were staffed, it will increase the feeling of safety. This finding was not confirmed in the case of Gores Marsh, which may be due to strong community ownership and control of the play area and therefore a general assumption that informal supervision and safety were already provided by adults living in the neighbourhood.
- 1.5. In general, there was a moderate belief that the improvements of the play areas have helped to reduce anti-social behaviour (NI 17, 22, 23 Safer communities). In most cases, there were substantial numbers of undecided respondents. This may be due to the short lifespan of the completed projects, which made it difficult to evaluate the impact of the improvements on anti-social behaviour. Generally, the play equipment in all play area was perceived as safe and children playing in the play areas were not threatened by traffic. Providing safe environments contributes to meeting National Indicators 69 and 70 (Safe children). In most cases, the play areas were considered challenging and have built in opportunities for children to take risks. In the case of Gores Marsh, some parents were concerned about the inclusion of 'perceived dangers' to children's safety such, as stones located near some play equipment. This reflected the mixed responses to the issue of safety and risk in the play provision in Gores Marsh.

Contribution of play rangers and voluntary groups

- 1.6. Field observations that coincided with organised play activities and events showed that a substantial number of children and visitors participated in the events and most children were not accompanied by an adult. It emerged that those who knew about play rangers activities reported that they provided open access play sessions in this park. This was confirmed by the observation of organised activities and events led by Play Rangers in Netham

Park. Parents and guardians believed that generally play rangers improved and organised children's play and contributed to building community capacity. It was also felt that risks and challenges were managed more effectively because of the involvement of play rangers. The presence and involvement of play rangers and volunteer groups was believed to minimise parents' fears and concerns about children's safety. Most of the children who attended the sessions organised by play rangers were generally unaccompanied. Despite the positive contribution of play rangers and voluntary groups, a large number of participants in the research were unaware of their presence and activities, which was reflected in a substantial number of N/A responses in the interviews and questionnaires.

Usage and perceptions of play areas

- 1.7. The research found that the new the new play areas were well used by the community and visitors. The balance between community and visitor numbers varied from one park to another. For instance Gores Marsh is essentially a community park, and it is predominantly used by local children, parents and community. However, Oldbury Court is a destination park and attracts a great number of visitors, in addition to members of the local community.
- 1.8. The parks and play areas were predominantly used for children's play, as intended by the Play Pathfinder programme. However, these areas also attract a variety of users for other activities. Dog walking, socialising, hanging out, and walking were amongst the other popular usages of the play areas. Despite the mixed uses of the parks, there was a little inter-generation interactions, and sometimes conflict between some activities (i.e. dog walking and children playing).
- 1.9. An interesting finding of the research is the number of children playing without adult supervision. St Paul's/St Agnes had a significant higher number of unaccompanied children. This is a community park where there is a great deal of informal supervision from nearby houses. In addition, the Children Centre and the activities organised by different youth and children groups also contribute to the safety of the playground, which may encourage children playing on their own without being accompanied by adults. In the other parks, children were mostly accompanied by adults and the ratio of adults per children is approximately one to two.
- 1.10. The design of the new play areas was rated positively by children, parents and the community. Over 75% of parents and carers felt that it enabled children to easily find their way around the play areas. The play areas had clearly identified accessible paths with hard surfacing. These paths stood out visually to enable children and other users to navigate their way around the area easily and safely.
- 1.11. Almost 90% of parents and community members felt that the improvements made it possible for different age groups to play together. They also believed that the play areas were versatile and meet children's needs. However, there were mixed responses in relation to the suitability of the play areas for teenagers' use. Only 55.7% of respondents agreed that the play areas were suitable for teenage use. This result is not unexpected, as the Play Pathfinder programme sought to improve play opportunities, primarily for 8-13 year old children.
- 1.12. Overall, there was a positive response to the design of the new play areas. Parents, children and members of the community were positive about the recent improvements made to the design of the play areas. In general, 93.3% were positive about the good balance between play equipment and space for free play. 92.7% of participants also strongly felt that the play area design makes good use of natural elements and also that the play area makes good use of a variety of natural elements, such as the use of landform and vegetation, as well as elements; such as wood and stones.
- 1.13. There was generally a positive feeling about the innovative design approaches in the new play areas, which, it was believed, added to their quality. The flexible layout of the design of the play area was believed to be aesthetically pleasing. 80.8% of parents reported that the improvements provided a wide range of play experiences. Due to the improved design and appeal of the play areas, children were believed to be enjoying playing on the new playgrounds, thus meeting NI 92-98 (Enjoyable time and better learning).
- 1.14. The increased variety and appeal of the improved play areas has led to higher numbers of users. 85.5% of respondents confirmed that the play areas are used either *very often* and *often* during weekends. The play areas were also used during weekdays. Since their completion, higher numbers of users were reported in all play areas. Oldbury Court is the most visited of all, followed by St. Paul's, Netham Park and Gores Marsh.

Social interaction and play

The findings of this study revealed that, within a short period of time, on average, over 37.8% percent of parents reported that their children made two friends and more as a result of the improvements. This figure was much higher for St Paul's/St Agnes, where almost 37% of parents reported that their children made more than three friends. Almost 19% of parents confirmed that their children made between two and three friends. Over 33% of children playing in Netham Park made more than one friend. Only 9% of parents reported that their children made only one friend in the new play areas. Over 19% of children in Oldbury Court only one friend. It appears that children playing in Gores Marsh (Community Park) made relatively few new friends, which may be explained by the fact that most already knew each other.

Physical activity and Play

- 1.15. Over 41% of children played more than an hour a day, as result of the improvements to the play areas in Bristol Play Pathfinder case studies. Over 41% of parents/guardians reported that their played more than one hour daily. A proportion of 35% of parents confirmed that their child played between thirty minute and one hour, and only 7.2% stated that their child played less than thirty minutes. This percentage was even higher for Oldbury Court (59%) and 58% for St Paul's. Additionally, 35% of children played between thirty minutes to one hour every day.

Daily over 43% and 41% of children respectively were playing actively in Gores Marsh and Netham Park for at least half an hour every day. These children met the minimum requirements of the international recommendations for daily physical activity (more than half an hour of MVPA). Only less than 7% of children played less than half an hour daily. Based on these initial results, there is enough evidence to suggest that the Play Pathfinder programme in Bristol has a significant effect on children's health (NI 199-Healthy children and young people). The challenge is to sustain this interest in playing outdoors for a longer periods of time.

Cost-benefit analysis

- 1.16. Seventy six percent of children were engaged for more than thirty minutes daily in active play. It was estimated that over 250 children were physically active for more than half an hour daily, which is equivalent to 7500 hours of exercise in a month. This is equal to 20.25 QALY. During the short period of use of the new play areas, the total value of the health benefits of play in the Play Pathfinder areas is estimated to £1,447,875.

Effectiveness of Children and Community engagement

- 1.17. It emerged that Bristol City Council Play and Park Team sought to reach out to children and wide sections of the communities, including hard reaching groups such as ethnic communities. Over 109 children were involved in the process and a large number of adults were also engaged. They conducted a consultation process to explain and discuss changes they were proposing to make to the parks and playgrounds. Participants in the consultation process were children and adults who live near the Play Pathfinder areas. Children were mainly engaged in play in these play areas through schools located near parks, such as Ashton Gate primary and Luckwell primary schools.
- 1.18. Staff used a range of methods to gather people's views and inform them about the impact of the play policy and implementation in their local area. The methods employed were varied, and included: the organisation of events in local neighbourhoods; consultation questionnaire surveys; focus groups meetings with children in local schools and public meetings. Some of the methods used, such as questionnaire surveys, were not as effective, as in most cases, the response rate was poor.
- 1.19. The consultation with adults entailed organising events in shopping centres and other public venues. This involved a series of fundraising events organised by staff or voluntary groups such as Gores Marshalls at Bedminster. The results showed that these events were well attended and generated a large amount of information. Responses to the consultation questionnaire were considerably less successful, only few were completed.
- 1.20. The use of innovative techniques, such as the use of a pictorial questionnaire with children, proved more successful. These techniques generated a wealth of information about what children wanted, what they did not like and what would make their play environments better. This technique allowed the children to express their views and preferences for the type of play and play equipment, in a range of forms. In addition, organising visits to a selection of playgrounds in London was an example of successful engagement of children and residents. This helped in establishing a meaningful dialogue between the designers, children and the local residents.
- 1.21. Using effective channels of communication to engage, foster and facilitate people's contributions at the early stages of a project have also proven critical to the success of engaging people. For instance, in the case of Gores Marsh, where the communication between the voluntary group and those in charge of the consultation process from Bristol City Council Team, was from the onset clear and well defined. This relationship became stronger and well established with time. This facilitated not only the partnership between the two groups, but more importantly, with the rest of the community, and above all, contributed significantly to the success of the project. In other cases, where the channels of communications were unclear, the partnership between Bristol City Council Team and local communities was not as effective.
- 1.22. The ability to win people's trust, from the onset, can also significantly affect the consultation process. In the case of Gores Marsh, local residents had a strong confidence on those driving the consultation process. As a result, they were more willing to reach agreement. This resulted in less conflict and objections to the development, and a stronger sense of being able to influence the project. Designers also benefited from more up-to-date and relevant information, as well as constructive feedback from the residents. Conversely, in the case of St. Paul's/St. Agnes, the decline in trust in the consultation process, in the later stages of the project, was apparent by some members of the community. This resulted in miscommunication, which the project worked to rectify by organising a facilitated workshop to achieve consensus on a final design.
- 1.23. Bestowing a sense of ownership of the project in the local communities has also proven to be pivotal to its success, since it affects the sustainability of local community engagement during the consultation process, the implementation of the project, and management of the play environments. For instance, better engaged voluntary community groups, in Gores Marsh, have felt a strong sense of responsibility for the local play environments. Their ownership of the project has led to a powerful partnership with Bristol City Council Team. In some cases, such as Oldbury Park, residents considered the playground the responsibility of the city authorities rather than their own. Consequently, their engagement was more restricted.
- 1.24. In general those who participated in the research felt that the consultation process on the design of play area was effective and their comments on whether the play area meets their needs were listened to and valued. They also acknowledged that they received sufficient information about the changes to be made to the existing play areas. They were positive about the prompt answers they received to their queries and concerns about the design of the play areas, and that the changes made to the design have been communicated to them effectively. As a result of the process, a large number of participants felt that they made a positive contribution to the consultation process,

and overall, they felt that the improvements to these play areas and parks resulted in a positive play experience. However, the results also demonstrate that there were a large number of people who were not fully aware of the consultation process or were not sufficiently engaged in it. There was also a great variation in the responses to the consultation process, which may indicate that it was more effective in community led play areas such as Gores Marsh and St Paul's and St Agnes and less effective in destination parks such as Oldbury Court.

Success in developing local ownership

- 1.25. The success of the improvements in developing ownership by children, young people, parents, carers and the local community is evident. Over 70% of participants agreed that the improvements led to a clear feeling of ownership for the play area by children and adults. Local people's involvement in the process has helped to achieve improved respect for the play area. This result was higher in St. Paul's (over 69%) and lower in Oldbury Court (over 38%).

Background

- 2.1. In 2008, the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) launched the Play Strategy. This promoted the significance of all children having more and better places to play. One commitment of the play strategy was to invest £235 million in the improvement and development of play spaces. Thirty local authorities were awarded Play Pathfinder status, and were given approximately £2 million capital funding to develop twenty eight play spaces and one adventure playground in their area. All other local authorities were awarded Play-Builder status and were given approximately £1 million capital funding to develop twenty two play spaces (Fair Play Pathfinder Project, 2008).
- 2.2. Bristol City Council was amongst the fortunate local authorities that secured a Play Pathfinder. The programme sought to develop a range of play facilities and play initiatives for 8-13 year old children. The investment by Play Pathfinder programme was to:
- Enable more children to undertake greater physical activity;
 - increase social integration;
 - engage in experiential learning thorough actively engaging with improved play environments across the city of Bristol;
 - communicate and disseminate the results of the evaluation effectively to all stakeholders.
- 2.3. This study sought to determine how the Fair Play Pathfinder programme in Bristol helped to address these challenges and added value to this substantial investment. The Youth and Play Services (YPS) and Bristol Parks Services (BPS) at Bristol City Council appointed the University of West of England (UWE), Bristol to undertake an independent study of the Play Pathfinder programme. The research addressed the contribution of Bristol City Council's play strategy, design and innovation to meeting the challenges on children's outdoor play, health and well-being.
- 2.4. The evaluation was carried out from September 2009 until 30th August 2010. The aim of the evaluation was to provide evidence based research on the impact of the Play Pathfinder programme on children, families and communities in four case study areas. The evaluation was to assess the impact and effectiveness of changes made to the existing playground in Bristol. More specifically, the study sought to address the following issues:
1. Provide evidence on outcomes for children and young people, families and wider communities from the investment in play provision;
 2. identify the best ways in the longer-term to monitor the impact of play opportunities on outcomes in Bristol;
 3. provide evidence on good practice in the provision of play spaces;
 4. inform further development of play strategy.

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

- 2.5. The evaluation seeks to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of the Fair Play Pathfinder project, and assess its impact on children, families and the wider community.

The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

- determine the impact of the Play Pathfinder programme on children's quality of play, health, and well-being.
- assess the effects of the programme on their families and the local community;
- provide evidence on good practice in the implementation of the Play Pathfinder;
- inform future developments of 'Playing for Real' and 'Parks and Green Space Strategy'.

Key criteria for evaluation

- 2.6. The criteria for this evaluation included accessibility of play spaces; the degree of success of inclusion; addressing risk, safety and challenge; the degree of playability of play spaces and the and effectiveness of Play Rangers and volunteer groups' involvement.

Accessibility of Play spaces

- Safety of routes to play

- Maintenance of routes
- Adaptability of access in relation to usage
- Intimidation and violence between different age groups or social groups of children versus youth

Degree of success of inclusiveness

- Success in engaging hard to reach groups through proactive work
- Disabled children
- Older children
- Ethnic minorities
- Range of abilities

Addressing risk, safety and challenge

- Role of formal and informal supervision
- Provision of safe 'hanging out' places for young people
- Impact on anti-social behaviour and vandalism
- Effectiveness in managing risk and challenge in play provision
- Addressing parental fears and concerns about safety (i.e. stranger danger, traffic, drugs, violence).
- Dealing with intimidation and violence between different age groups or social groups of children versus youth

Degree of playability of play spaces

- Promotion of a variety of play activities
- Encouragement of play activities for various age groups
- Supporting healthy lifestyles (physical activities)
- Promotion of social interactions
- Sustaining play (frequency)

Effectiveness of Play Rangers and volunteer groups' involvement

- Assessing Play Rangers involvement in safeguarding and encouraging children's play activities
- Evaluating the roles of supporting volunteers
- Effectiveness in building community capacity

Effectiveness of consultation and engagement

- Effectiveness of methods of consultation and engagement
- Effectiveness of community consultation and dealing with conflict of values
- Success in developing local ownership (children, young people, parents, carers and local community)
- Level of local management and governance of play provision

Cost effectiveness of the programme in Bristol

- Models of cost effectiveness
- Cost-effectiveness of the programme.

Case study areas

2.7. The evaluation focused on four case study areas in different locations within the City. The selected playgrounds varied in their scale, character, design and management.

1. Gores Marsh playground in Bedminster;
2. Oldbury Court in Fishponds;
3. Netham Park in Barton Hill;
4. St Paul's/St. Agnes park in St. Paul's.

Design of the evaluation

2.8. The study involved the following key stages:

- Preparatory work: Consultations with Bristol City Council, and other key stakeholders as well as the identification of case studies and relevant evidence.
- Desktop study: Review and analysis of key policies, strategies and implementations on child and young people. The study also examined available research evidence.
- Designing the evaluation: Research methodology, Sampling strategies and instruments for fieldwork. The main stage involved play areas fieldwork, consultation process, analysis and evaluation and presentation of the study findings.

Methodology and data collection

- 3.1. The research presented in this report is based on mixed method approach, involving in depth face-to-face interviews and questionnaires with parents, children and the local communities in four case-study areas. The study also entailed the use of child friendly techniques to engage children and determine their responses to the improvements. Non-intrusive observation techniques were also used to establish children's quality of play in the study areas. As such, findings of this research provide useful insights into the perceptions, views and experiences of parents, children and local communities.
- 3.2. The Evaluation of the impact of the Play Pathfinder has used a case based analyses approach, in which the research team simultaneously participated in (largely in a consultative capacity) and analysed the various aspects of the playgrounds' design and use. A combination of qualitative and quantitative tools was used to assess and evaluate the design, and observe the quality of children's play on the playgrounds.
- 3.3. The following stages were used in the evaluation design:
 - initial surveys of a sample of children and their families for each case study area
 - opinion surveys of a sample of residents (local community) – to identify the impact of the Fair Play Pathfinder project in terms of perceptions of their areas and associated issues.
 - observations and consultations—the feedback from adults and children was collected using objective techniques and assessing the use, appropriateness, effectiveness and a degree of success of refurbishment of the play area.
- 3.4. The specific outputs, methods and timescales were as follows:
 - **The evaluation framework**-presented the evaluation methodology, details of sampling strategies and instruments for fieldwork. Delivered by month two.
 - **the Immediate Small Scale Review Report** - comprising interviews with a sample of stakeholders to explore good play practice. Delivered by month three.
 - **the Fair Play Pathfinder Impact**- Survey comprising the children and family survey, opinion collection, cognitive mapping and observation. All the surveys were conducted in the four case study sites. Reporting in month eight.
 - The children and families surveys consisted of location sampling and face-to-face interviews in respondents' own homes with a reasonable sample size per case study area. Average interview length was fifteen minutes for children, twenty minutes for parents.
 - The opinion surveys consisted of random location sampling and face-to-face interviews in respondents' case study area. Average interview length was fifteen minutes.
 - The observation/design evaluation of the case study play areas consisted of thirty visits to the case study sites throughout the evaluation period, and involved observations, cognitive mapping exercise and interviews. The data were collected also on behavioural play, play space design perception and impact. The case studies selected by Youth and Play services were:
 - St Paul's playground – an adventure play/public space
 - Oldbury Court Park – a major destination play park.
 - Gores Marsh playground – local play area.
 - Netham Park – a large multipurpose play area.
 - **The Fair Play Pathfinder Local Area Evaluation Fieldwork** –explored impacts and issues, including visits to the case study areas, interviews with staff and stakeholders and data collection. The audit included the assessment of the functionality, appeal, quality, accessibility and safety of the space.
 - **The Fair Play Pathfinder Children and Family Survey** -included random location sampling, and face-to-face interviews with children and parents across the four case study areas selected for the evaluation.

About Bristol Play Pathfinder Project

3.4. Introduction

Bristol's Pathfinder project is a three years long, £2.66 million, former DCSF funded capital investment programme. The following is a summary of investments and deliverables of the project.

Year 1 – 08/09

In year 1 £785k of former DCSF grant funding (£592k Capital & £193k Revenue funding) and £338k of Parks and other match funding was successfully invested in twelve play sites - four Adventure play grounds, two destination parks and six local parks

Year 1 – 08/09

In year 1 £785k of former DCSF grant funding (£592k Capital & £193k Revenue funding) and £338k of Parks and other match funding was successfully invested in twelve play sites - four Adventure play grounds, two destination parks and six local parks.

Year 2 – 09/10

Eighteen sites are being delivered in year 2:

- One Adventure playground, one destination park and sixteen local parks
- Currently fifteen sites are complete and open to the public.
- By the end of June 17 were be complete and open.
- Lamplighters delayed due to equipment delivery issues were completed by the end of July.

Year 3 – 10/11

The final year of pathfinder, comprises a £123k former funded revenue programme which supports:

- A major media and events promotional campaign organised by Young People Services,
- Site opening events.
- Completion of the Pathfinder Play Watch and Play Training programmes.
- Year 3 project team staffing costs.

Desktop Study

Introduction

- 4.1. A 'desktop' study is used to collect and analyse existing information and evidence from various sources including public domain, scientific, and available project sources. The purpose is to achieve a clear understanding of the issues relevant to the evaluation of the Fair Play Pathfinder.
- 4.2. This report collates evidence from play policies and strategies, at national and local levels, and their effects on children and young people's play. The aim is to inform the evaluation of Bristol's Fair Play Pathfinder project. The review will provide a foundation to the identification of baseline criteria against which the findings will be assessed.
- 4.3. The main literature review included publications by the Department for Children Schools and Families (former DCSF), the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), Sport England, the Department for Health and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). Relevant research evidence from various sources was also examined.
- 4.4. Three key strands of documentation published since 2001 were reviewed:
 - National policies, strategies and frameworks for children's play;
 - Bristol City council developed strategies and policies for children's play and Parks and Green spaces;
 - The Fair Play Pathfinder programme.

Background

- 4.5. In recent years, new public health challenges have brought the issue of the decline of young people's outdoor play to the forefront. Physical activity guidelines recommend children should engage in 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity a day. Yet, children spend less time playing outdoors than previous generations (Clements, 2004). The prevalence of obesity among children has doubled in the last twenty years. Studies of children's activity levels and obesity confirmed that children with higher weight status spent more time in sedentary activities than those with lower weight status (Chinn and Rona 2001).
- 4.6. Yet, powerful evidence suggest that to counteract the deficiencies in sedentary lifestyles, children need to spend longer periods of time outside, engaged in outdoor play, physical activity and social interaction (Rivkin, 2000).
- 4.7. Research found that the availability of play environments that are accessible, safe and secure, tend to offer improved opportunities for active play and social interaction (Giles-Corti and Donovan, 2003). Play environments that encourage and nurture intergenerational relationships facilitative mutual concern for children safety (Playday 2010).
- 4.8. This study sought to determine how the Fair Play Pathfinder programme in Bristol helped to address these challenges and added value to this substantial investment. The Youth and Play Services (YPS) and Bristol Parks Services (BPS) at Bristol City Council appointed UWE, Bristol to undertake an independent study of the Play Pathfinder programme. The research addressed the contribution of Bristol City Council's play strategy, design and innovation to meeting the challenges on children's outdoor play, health and well-being.
- 4.9. The research methods presented in this report are based on a mixed method approach, involving in depth face-to-face interviews and questionnaires with parents, children and community in four case-study areas. The study also entailed the use of child friendly techniques to engage children and determine their responses to the improvements. Non intrusive observation techniques were also used to establish children's quality of play in the study areas. As such, findings of this research provide useful insights into the perceptions, views and experiences of parents, children and local community.

Children's Play

4.10. A clear and generally understood definition of children's play is lacking because there is no coherent understanding of what is meant by play. The following definitions have been frequently used in literature:

- Play is a continually creative process (Aaron and Winawer, 1965).
- It is a scientific research conducted by children (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1970).
- It is an approach to action, not a form of activity (Moyles, 1989).
- It is an imitation of adult's activities bringing children closer to the adult world' (Noschis, 1992) and it is the 'nature of childhood' (Prout and James 1997).
- Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child (National Playing Fields Association 2000).
- The activities of children from babyhood until the early teenage years (National children's Bureau, 2004).
- Simply how children enjoy being alive in the world now (Voce, Play England, 2008).
- Children and young people following their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons, having fun while respecting themselves and others (The Play Strategy, 2008).

A Typology of Play

4.11. The literature review revealed many attempts to categorise children's play:

- Fifteen categories: symbolic play, rough and tumble play, socio-dramatic play, social play, creative play, communication play, dramatic play, deep play, exploratory play, fantasy play, imaginative play, locomotor play, mastery play, object play and role play (NPFA, 2000).
- Physical, intellectual and social/emotional. These forms are identified as having subdivisions of gross motor, fine motor and psychomotor for physical play; linguistic, scientific, symbolic/mathematical and creative for intellectual play; and therapeutic, linguistic, repetitious, empathic, self-concept and gaming as social/emotional play (Moyles, 1989).
- Play with high verbal content, play with high imaginative content, play with high physical content and less structured play, including walking, talking, sitting and watching (Woolley et al., 2005).

Benefits of Play

4.12. Play theorists widely argue that outdoor play is of particular importance. There is substantial evidence to suggest that play is key to the mental, physical and social well-being of children. Some of the key outcomes of play were:

- play is an important tool for developing social skills, culture and community (Hart, 1994).
- play is a part of the learning experience as it allows children to learn negotiation skills and to be creative (Parker, 1998).
- unaccompanied activities are particularly important as over time these independent experiences result in a feeling of competence (Huttermoser, 1995).
- adult support, guidance or supervision, may help to achieve the most successful play provision (DCMS, 2003).
- free play is the opportunity to explore and investigate materials and situations for oneself (Moyles, 1989).
- play provides opportunities for the development of social skills, such as negotiation; language and comprehension; the promotion of physical activity, mobility and improved mental health; social and environmental learning; art and culture; and socialisation and citizenship (Cole-Hamilton et al., 2002)
- a lack of play can have a negative impact on the development of a child and potentially provide social problems for communities (NPFA 2000).
- socially, outdoor play allows children to explore their local neighbourhood, learn the rules of everyday life and discover the different textures and elements in the world (Clements 2004).
- acquiring life skills and improving children's emotional and academic development (Ginsburg 2006).

Play Requirements and Needs

4.13. According to the existing literature a value system for play should include:

- physical fitness;
- intelligence;
- creativity and imagination;
- emotional stability and initiative;
- social assurance and cooperation;
- self confidence and competence
- individuality;
- a sense of responsibility and integrity;
- a non-sexist outlook;
- a sense of humour (Hill, 1980).

4.14. A play area should cater for children to meet and socialise; offer opportunities for climbing and balancing; a chance for children to test themselves and each other; provide somewhere to explore and take risks; create a place for

solidarity; offer excitement, movement and colour; include equipment or landscaping that permits fantasy or imaginative play; provide a space in which to be noisy, boisterous and energetic; offer items to play with, rather than on; and different textures, materials, heights and levels planes (Coffin and Williams, 1989).

4.15. Five elements of children's development should be provided for by a well-designed, well-managed play environment. All children should have the opportunities for: fine and gross motor skill development; decision making; learning; dramatic play; and social development. Playing should be fun (Moore et al., 1992).

Play Space

4.16. Within the literature on play the following are considered as qualities of play provision:

- Flexibility of physical elements to enhance the play experience for children. These elements might include all sorts of natural elements.
- Sensory experiences for sight, touch and smell are also considered, with reference to them providing cues in the space for children of all abilities.
- Variety of play spaces to give children the opportunities for different social experiences and to give children the possibility to experience.
- Play areas should provide highly challenging settings with many different events for the physical development of the upper body, balance and co-ordination without exposing children to unnecessary hazards.
- Different spatial settings of being open or enclosed, high or low, in light or in shade (Moore et al., 1992).
- Access and movement: opportunities for challenge and risk-taking.
- Minimal unexpected hazards; provision for a wide range of interests and abilities.
- A supply of moveable parts; provision for a variety of sensory experiences.
- Clear divisions within a space; clear signage and easy to read signs; all of this underpinned with the space being attractive and secure for both children and adults.
- Playgrounds should provide for a series of dichotomous relationships, including being accessible and inaccessible; active and passive; challenge/risk and repetition/security; hard and soft; natural and people built; open and closed.
- Permanence and change: private and public. Playground design should include sense of place/uniqueness, gardening, natural areas, sand and water play, stimulus shelters, organised games, variety and complexity, enhanced movement, playgrounds layout, educational resources, surfacing and accessibility (Hart, 1993; Frost et al. 2004).

Roles of the Environment

4.17. The majority of children worldwide live in urban environments, approximately half of them in urban centres of less than 500,000 population (Satterthwaite, 2006).

Children's time is being pulled indoors by homework, technology, parental anxiety, stranger-danger, and the danger of traffic (Jago et al., 2005)

4.18. The focus should be on the everyday life of urban children. The main concern should be for the quality of the environment where children spend most of their time. Access to nature can be guided by design policy in childcare centres schools, residential neighbourhoods, and community facilities such as parks, museums, zoos, and botanic gardens (Moore and Cooper Marcus, 2006).

- There is a growing parental concern about children's outdoor play. Parents underestimate the ability of children to manage their own personal safety (Valentine, 1997).
- Fears are exacerbated to a large extent by an increasingly risk-averse society (Gill 2007).
- Added health care costs over the lifetimes of children would be avoided by giving students the opportunity to be physically active during the school day (Moore and Wong, 1997).
- Children value and prefer natural environments to urban and built environments which they associate with adventure, risk and a challenge of being outdoors (Titman, 1994).
- Natural environments seem to be associated with the cognitive development of children through opportunities for exploration, experimentation and play (Hart, 1994).
- Active learning in outdoor settings stimulates all aspects of child development more readily than indoor environments (Moore and Wong 1996).
- Play is extremely important in the development of social skills, the development of gross and fine motor skills, and the utilisation of excess energy (International Association for the Child's Right to Play, 1982).

- Exposure to natural environments seems to play a role in cognitive development process by improving a child's awareness, reasoning and observational skills, and the kinds of associative skills that enhance neurological functions (Pyle, 2001).
- Stimulating and memorable environments advance children's development significantly. Conversely, dull and easily forgotten environments can delay or block development (Moore, 1986).
- "Scrounging" in the outdoors provides children with exercise (Pyle, 2001).
- Healthy therapeutic effect is experienced by children who are directly exposed to nature (Wells and Evans, 2003).
- The need for more complex spaces for play (Stine, 1997).

Public Engagement

The public's involvement in the process offers the following benefits:

- Delivers an improved project by meeting social needs and making better use of the resources of a particular community.
- offers the user group an increased sense of having influenced the design and decision-making process, and increases users' awareness of the consequences of decisions.
- provides the professional more relevant and up-to-date information than was possible before (Sanoff, 2000).
- stimulates the generation of a variety of ideas/alternatives and build a consensus amongst a diverse community.
- let people make their contributions at early stages of a project.
- foster cooperation and ability to influence decisions.
- avoid further conflicts and objections once a development has been undertaken.
- minimises activities such as vandalism, by bestowing a sense of ownership of the project in the people (King 1989).

Dandekar (1982) suggested that the involvement of the public requires three modes of communication:

- Presentation of information to the public;
- receipt of information from the public and;
- exchange of ideas and opinions that build upon shared information as the ideas evolve.

10.1. Although it is accepted that the consultation process has many benefits, there are also barriers such as low rate of participation, longer time to make decisions, and emotional confrontation between the sponsors of development proposals and their opponents (Cohen, 2000). Another possible drawback of public consultation is due to the technical complexity of design and planning issues and problems that increase and become difficult to understand. Lack of adequate experience by designers in working with the public, citizens who represent special interests and the final decisions that are likely to end up as a compromise are some major difficulties (Sanoff, 2000).

10.2. Available evidence suggests that miscommunication and mistrust of designers, planners, and decision-makers often lead to community's frustration, and opposition to changes. Delays in decision-making and confrontation are often fuelled by misinformation and misunderstanding. Thus, clear communication becomes a key condition for collaborative practices, which emphasise the integration and synthesis of common goals, through well-organised communication (Cohen, 2000). Public consultation requires effective communication channels and media to provide suitable opportunities for the public to engage in the process. Researchers on consultative processes in the planning and design fields are increasingly exploring the conditions in which processes with the qualities of comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy, truthfulness and other qualities, such as openness, total inclusion, fit for purpose, reflexivity and creativity seem likely to arise (Healey, 2003).

National Policies, Strategies and Programmes

4.19. The first UK government strategy on children's play was published in 2008. The intention was to rebuild opportunities for children to play which is expected to have a dramatic effect by offering children the space and opportunities they need.

The main sources of this documentation are:

1. Department of Children, Schools and Families (Former DCSF)
2. Department for Environments, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
3. Communities and Local Government (CLG)
4. National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnership
5. Departments of health
6. Healthy Towns Programme

- **Department of Children, Schools and Families**

4.20. In 2003 the Government published a Green Paper called 'Every Child Matters'. The legal underpinning of this document is a thorough consultation process and the Children Act 2004. The Every Child Matters agenda sets out the Government's approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19.

4.21. The document suggests that play can make a significant contribution in broad principled terms to the five outcomes of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, which includes:

- Healthy
- Stay safe
- Achieve and enjoy
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

4.22. The Children's Plan is a vision for change to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up.

- It contains a range of measures looking at all aspects of a child's life to ensure that all children enjoy a happy, healthy, safe childhood and achieve their full potential
- It seeks to ensure services work together to intervene early to prevent problems turning into crises
- It provides more support for parents to do the best for their child, and joins services up so that they are shaped around the needs of children and their families, reflecting the lives they lead rather than professional boundaries.

- **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

4.23. Securing the future:

- Childhood obesity has been linked to a number of illnesses later on in life.
- The prevalence of obesity in 2-10 year-old increased from 10 per cent to 14 per cent between 1995 and 2003
- Walking or cycling are still the main ways for children to get to school. However the percentage doing so fell from 58 per cent in 1989-91 to 47 per cent in 2002-3. Those going to school by private motor vehicle increased from 22 per cent in 1989-91 to 31 per cent in 2002-3. The percentage of children travelling to school by public transport remained relatively constant over this period.
- The number of children killed or seriously injured in accidents fell from 12,400 in 1979 to 4,100 in 2003 (a drop of 67 per cent).

- **Communities and Local Government**

4.24. The Government's strategy for improving the quality of place seeks to create world class places. They can be achieved by:

1. Communities in control: real people, real power;
2. Building Cohesive Communities: What frontline staff and community activists need to know;
3. Impact Assessment: Planning Policy Statement: eco-towns:
 - Offer opportunities for space within and around the dwellings (particularly important for families with children).
 - Promote healthy and sustainable environments through "Active Design" principles and healthy living choices.
 - Social cohesion issues that are raised by small homes which do not support the needs of people living in them (eg. children who have no space at home to study or play).
 - Healthy, biodiversity-rich areas can provide a range of recreational activities, such as walking, bird watching and fishing that improve the quality of life. They can also provide a stimulating environment in which children can play and learn. These in turn help to create a strong, cohesive community.
 - Further support through training and guidance will also be provided to planners to help them consider the impact of planning on play and broader physical activity patterns. And in recognition of the importance of a clean and healthy environment, a Children's Environment and Health Strategy has been consulted upon and will be published later this year.

- **Department of Health**

4.25. The strategy for children and young people's health:

4.26. "Healthy lives, brighter futures" sets out how the Government will work in partnership with local authorities and primary care trusts and those working across children's health services to build the quality of support for families at key stages in their children's lives.

- 4.27. It stressed the importance of children and young people's health. A healthy start in life is at the heart of a happy childhood and the ability of every young person to achieve their potential and grow up well prepared for the challenges of adolescence and adulthood.
- 4.28. Child and adolescent mental health services and others play a hugely important role in supporting children and families to lead healthy lives. Health and wellbeing is central to the concept of the 21st Century School.
- 4.29. The National Healthy Schools Programme similarly requires a whole-school approach to health promotion across four core themes: PSHE education; healthy eating; physical activity; and mental health and psychological wellbeing.
- 4.30. Wider environmental factors also have a huge impact upon children's and young people's ability to stay healthy. For example, walking or cycling to school or play areas is a key way to improve children's health and to reduce obesity, at the same time reducing pollution, and increasing road safety and community cohesion. And outdoor play in green spaces benefits children psychologically and physically. Even small amounts of green space are shown to have qualities that facilitate relaxation and recovery from mental fatigue and stress, particularly for those with symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- 4.31. There is compelling evidence on the benefits of play to children, both for enjoyment and developing the skills needed to prosper in childhood, and as preparation for later life. This includes the development of social skills, risk management skills and brain development associated with the ability to learn. The Government has therefore committed to record new investment in healthy neighbourhoods and communities. Between 2008 and 2011, as announced in *The Children's Plan*, £235 million is being invested to support every local authority to provide a variety of designated public play areas, free of charge, that are both safe and accessible.
- 4.32. This investment in innovative and stimulating local play areas will have an emphasis on the needs of eight to thirteen year olds and increase their opportunities to be active. In December 2008, the Government announced the acceleration of this capital investment programme, so all local authorities will be able to access play funding of at least £1m by spring 2009.
- 4.33. Furthermore, support through training and guidance will also be provided to the planners to help them consider the impact of planning on play and broader physical activity patterns.
- 4.34. The PE and Sport Strategy for Young People will focus between 2008 and 2011 on a number of areas, which contributes to children's overall health and fitness:
- Giving children a sense of entitlement to 5 hours of PE and sport a week, and so stimulating demand.
 - Improving the quality of provision by training for teachers, coaches, and sports and dance clubs.
 - Providing a more diverse and attractive range of sports and dance through Sport Unlimited.
 - Creating a national competition framework, so that all children can enjoy competitive sport, whether in a team or as an individual, whether competing against others or against a personal best.
 - Encouraging more children into leadership and volunteering in sport.
 - Providing more sporting opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, and for children with disabilities
 - Ensuring eleven year olds can swim twenty five metres and understand water safety, as set out in the National Curriculum.
 - Minimising the potential for sports injuries and accidents, and ensuring excellent child protection in sport.
- 4.35. The PE and Sport Strategy for Young People includes a commitment to offer sixteen to nineteen year olds three hours of high quality sports a week.

National indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships

- 4.36. In July 2009, Play England developed and published a set of local play indicators to measure the success of play provision. These compliment but not replace NI 199, the national indicator on children's satisfaction with parks and play areas.
- 4.37. The rationale behind the NI 199 is to ensure that local authorities invest in safe and stimulating play facilities, leading to an increase of satisfaction and take-up amongst children within local authorities. This indicator is the following question asked in Ofsted's TellUs survey conducted in 2009

Very good	Fairly good	Neither good nor poor	Fairly poor	Very poor	Don't know
□	□	□	□	□	□

- 4.38. Table 1 suggests ways in which play provision, investment in more play opportunities and the development of more child-friendly open spaces can support local authorities in the delivery of a wide range of outcomes across the National Indicator Set.

Outcome	National Indicators	Contribution of play provision and play space
Stronger communities	NI 1-6	Play space is a high priority for families; play spaces can engender community; play brings families together; play reduces youth crime and anti-social behaviour.
Safer communities	NI 17,22,23 NI 47,48	Play provision and child-friendly public spaces can promote sense of belonging; Increase mutual understanding and respect; Change perceptions of behaviour and responsibility. Reduction of accidents to children through the reduction of car usage Children involvement in planning and design of routes can facilitate access to play and reduce accidents
Healthy children and young people	NI 50,54,55,56,57,58 NI 199	playing out increases physical activity it promotes mental wellbeing and resilience Play provision offers opportunities to have fun and enjoy life Develop and maintain friendship Increase self-confidence
Safe children	NI 69 NI 70	Well designed play spaces and supervised play can reduce bullying and help self-confidence Play spaces like adventure playgrounds can enable children to develop the physical skills and confidence to manage risks at play It can help to reduce accidents Safer routes, street play schemes and greater supervision should reduce accidents involving children
Enjoyable time and better learning	NI 72-78 NI 88, 109 NI 92-98, 106-108	Promote informal learning, creativity and initiative Improve children's ability to concentrate Schools can be more enjoyable and welcoming Staffed play can offer a wide range of activities and make them more attractive Things to do in places to go
A positive contribution	NI 110	Design through engaging with children can enhance the sense of ownership and respect volunteering opportunities for young people
Economic well being	NI 117	Training and employment opportunities Safe cohesive and prosperous communities Compensation for lack of other opportunities
Tackling exclusion and promoting quality	NI 140	Inclusive and accessible with all neighbourhoods having access to play areas
Local economy	NI 151 NI 155, 160, 170, 175, 179	Play provision includes increased investment and generated business Play spaces can increase resident's satisfaction with homes and services
Environmental sustainability	NI 195, 197 Ni 198	Children play areas add to general use and pride in community space Natural play areas add to green space and engender environmental awareness Safe play influence children to walk or cycle

Table 1: National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authorities Partnerships

• Healthy Towns Programme

- 4.39. The Government-commissioned Foresight report (2009) warned that unless action is taken, nine out of ten British adults and two-thirds of children will be overweight or obese by the year 2050.
- 4.40. This would impose an additional £50 billion burden on the NHS and the economy, which would lead to huge increases in conditions like cancer, heart disease, diabetes and knock nine years off the average Briton's life expectancy.
- 4.41. Nine English towns have been chosen to try out a series of health initiatives designed to head off the looming epidemic of obesity.
- 4.42. Redesigning town centres to encourage walking and cycling, a grow-your-own fruit and vegetable scheme for social housing tenants, urban gardens in areas hit by last year's floods and a `cycle-recycle` project to help people learn to ride and look after their bikes.
- 4.43. The £30 million "Healthy Towns" programme includes a loyalty card allowing individuals to earn points by buying healthy food and taking part in exercise which can be redeemed for free sportswear or games equipment.

4.44. Action will be taken to make parks more attractive places to visit and safe "active travel corridors" will be created to link people's homes with "health hubs".

Implementation of Play

4.45. Most of the current policy framework for children has been developed with a view of 'balancing rights and responsibilities for children' (Play England, 2008). This material was drawn together mainly by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, National Children's Bureau, and Play England. These documents provide sets of objectives that constitute frameworks for children's play, and as such are recommended as key determinants for play. The formulation of these objectives took into account the general public's and children's views of what constitutes successful play and what are its benefits for children. The objectives also come from theoretical work on children and play, and from empirical work asking different stakeholders their opinions of children play spaces.

4.46. The key documents are:

- Play Strategy;
- Design for Play;
- Embedding the Play Strategy;
- These documents mainly attempted to draw up generic lists of objectives. They are included in Government guidance, local strategies and programmes giving them considerable legitimacy.
- Play England believes that the primary aim of local authority involvement in support for local spaces, facilities for children, young people's play and informal recreation should be to increase the numbers and frequency of children and young people playing freely in their local neighbourhoods or in staffed play facilities (Play England, 2008).
- *Embedding the Play Strategy* is a document which offers detailed guidance to local authorities on the implementation of the statutory guidance.

The vision for 2020	A variety of supervised and unsupervised places for play, free of charge	Local neighbourhoods and feel like safe, interesting places to play	Safe and accessible routes to play spaces for all children and young people;	Attractive, welcoming, well-maintained and well-used parks and open spaces	A clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours	An active role of children, young people and families in the development of local play spaces	Attractive, welcoming and accessible play spaces for all local children
Design for Play	Play designed for their site	Well located, sustainable, and appropriately maintained	The use of natural elements	Wide range of play experiences	Meeting community needs	Flexibility built into the layout that allow for change and evolution	Build in opportunities to take risks and challenges
Play Strategy	More places to play: ongoing development and renovation of play spaces	Supporting play throughout childhood	Supporting play throughout childhood	Child-friendly communities: engaging communities in play	Sustaining and embedding play in the community		
Play policy	Children should be healthy	Children should stay safe	Achieve and enjoy	Make a positive contribution	Achieve economic well being		

Table 2: National objective for children and young people play

Policies and Strategies and for Children's Play Developed by Bristol City

4.47. Bristol City Council play policy "Making Play Matter" sets out the outline values and principles of underpinning children's play in Bristol. The cross cutting play strategy "Playing for Real" specifies requirements for different council departments and stakeholders to improve children's play across the city. Its intention is to secure a seed change approach through the implementation of the objectives detailed in the strategy.

4.48. Bristol’s Play Strategy was further developed through the Play Charter “Bringing Play to Life” and Inclusion Strategy “Play Matters” for children and young people of Bristol. Another relevant document is the Bristol Parks and Green Spaces strategy which commits to the quality of improvements to children’s play in up to seventy new play areas across the city. This strategy deals with some key public concerns such as access and provision, safety and anti-social behaviour of young people.

4.49. Bristol’s Fair Play Pathfinder project aims to make a contribution to the Play strategy and the Children’s and Young People’s Plan. It invests the funding obtained from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (Former DCSF) in a range of play facilities and play initiatives for 8-13 year old children. Its main aims are:

- Enabling more children to undertake greater physical activity;
- increasing social integration;
- engage in experiential learning through actively engaging with improved play environments.

4.50. Bristol’s Parks and Green Space Strategy, (Table 2), is a strategic framework designed to provide a range of accessible outdoor play opportunities for children and young people. It is linked to the spatial planning of the city and aimed at meeting the two particular outcomes:

- A high quality environment and
- Health and well-being.

Bristol’s Play Strategy	To increase the range, distribution and quality of supervised play provision	Involvement of children and young people in all decisions which affect their play	To improve opportunities to meet and play within shared public space	To increase the quality of play opportunities within formal settings	Play opportunities, environments and facilities should have acceptable level of risk, challenge and stimulation			
Bristol’s Play policy	Play provision should extend the choice and control that children and young people have over their play	It should allow children and young people testing of boundaries	It should manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe	It maximises the range of play opportunities	It fosters independence and self-esteem	It fosters independence and self-esteem	It fosters children respect for others and supports social interaction	It fosters children well-being, healthy growth, development, creativity, capacity to learn and similar
Bristol’s Parks and Green space strategy	Play spaces will be located and designed to fit into the existing environment and offer a high visibility	Access to play spaces via good paths from key entrances	Safe routes to the play space	A high maintenance regime	Most play spaces will be dog free and enclosed with railings	Area of grass for play	Seating for parents and carers	An inclusive environment in selection of equipment and in terms of access

Table 3: Bristol City Council policy and strategies for place, spaces and play

• **The Original Aims and Objective of Bristol’s Play Pathfinder Project**

4.51. Bristol City’s strategic aim of the Fair Play Pathfinder project (published in Making Play Matter, 2003) is to “increase the quality of children’s play opportunities in a variety of setting and to ensure that all Bristol’s children and young people have easy access to such opportunities”.

4.52. Bristol City Council play policy “Making Play Matter” sets out the following outline of values and principles underpinning children’s play:

• **Consultation and community engagement**

4.53. The policy and strategy for the project was developed through the widespread consultation and involvement of stakeholders, customers and children. Consultation process included: workshops, questionnaires, seminars, conferences, focus groups, video and engagement with specific forums such as the Bristol Parks Forum.

- **Focus on the real needs of children**

4.54. This is to be ensured through the participation from young people and children in the design process.

- **New play provision offered is inspiring, creative and safe**

4.55. This aim includes quality design, condition and maintenance as well as a comprehensive range of features in parks and open spaces.

- **Play for all children with an emphasis on innovation and creativity**

4.56. Play facilities will deliver physically active play opportunities and stimulate imaginative play for children using natural materials to encourage children to explore the natural environment, through the introduction of more natural play rather than a reliance on traditional fixed equipment.

- **Sustainable transport**

4.57. Play areas will include the provision of cycle tracks to encourage travel by bicycle, cycle ways and footpaths will include routes to youth centres, play facilities, parks and open spaces

4.58. In 2008 Play Pathfinder published more specific objectives for public play areas. These objectives are:

- playgrounds will be bespoke and respond to the needs of the setting in each location;
- they will offer a wide range of challenge and acceptable risk;
- they will provide thrilling, social and imaginative spaces;
- playgrounds should match the needs expressed by all children capturing their imagination;
- the renewed playgrounds will encourage greater active use and motivate children to healthier life style.

10.3. Public consultation in decision making has a relatively lengthy history. Ever since the first Town and Country Planning Act in 1947, varying degrees of public consultations have existed in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world. Although it was not until 1969 (Skeffington, 1969) that widespread public consultation became embedded in the decision-making process.

10.4. Various terminologies were used to describe public consultation. For this report, public/community consultation is used depict the process that involves the public in problem solving, decision-making and uses public input to make decisions. This process may be expressed as public consultation, involvement or community engagement.

10.5. Consultative planning/design calls for a process of interaction among individuals or heterogeneous institutions. It is a method of group deliberation that brings parties together for face-to-face discussions. A significant range of individuals are chosen because they represent those with differing stakes and interests in a problem or opportunity. This discussion process requires that participants have common information and that all become informed about each other's interests. Public consultation in the process of planning/design and implementation is a key factor in the collaborative design process (Batty et al. 1999).

10.6. It is commonly acknowledged that to bring satisfactory design services to communities is through cooperative efforts by various expert groups and stakeholders. People from different fields and background work together on common goals of design, and these goals define the nature of interactions that occur.

5

Effectiveness of accessibility of play spaces

5.1. Access to the play areas is a critical issue that may affect their effective use. Sustrans' report (2010) Moving forward: A year of delivering smarter travel choice to make the improved areas more accessible on foot, bike and public transport, in order to contribute to reduced congestion and carbon dioxide emissions, improved access, increased physical activity, and more pleasant neighbourhoods stressed the need to increase sustainable travel choices, and to begin the rapid transition to low-carbon and healthy travel. The achievement of these goals was a challenge for Bristol City Council.

Accessibility of Play Spaces

- The play areas are welcoming

5.2. Table 4 shows that together *strongly* and *fairly agreed* responses added 96% indicating that a high proportion of participants agree to the statement "the new play areas are welcoming".

Strongly agree responses achieved a 71.6%, followed by *fairly agree* responses of 24.4%.

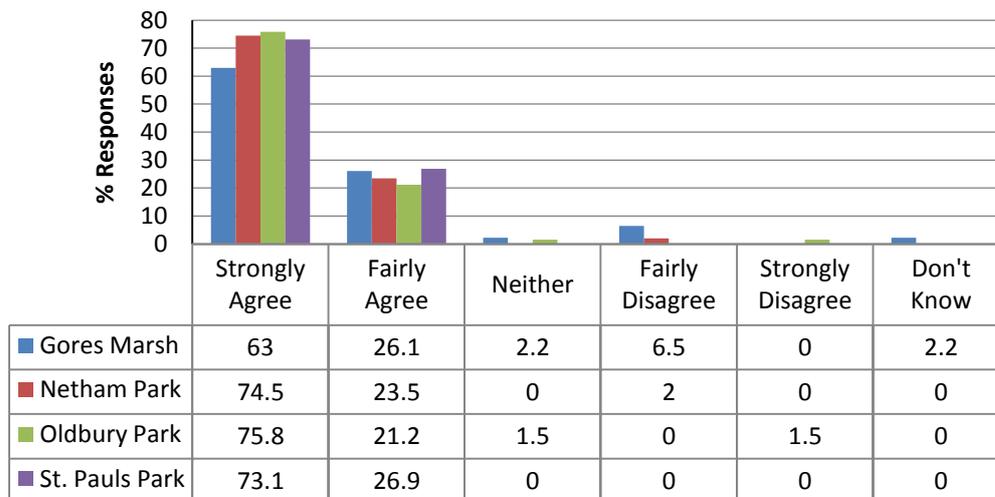


Table 4: Play area welcoming

- The play space is accessible by foot and also by bike

5.3. Descriptive statistics show on Table 5 that a high percentage of respondents (96.6%) concurred that the play space is accessible by foot and by bike, as together, *strongly agree* (81.2%) and *fairly agree* (15.4%) responses achieved the highest scores. In Oldbury Court *strongly agree* responses achieved 63.6%, which was lower than in the other play areas, followed by *fairly agree* answers that represented 28.8%, which at the same time is higher than the other parks.

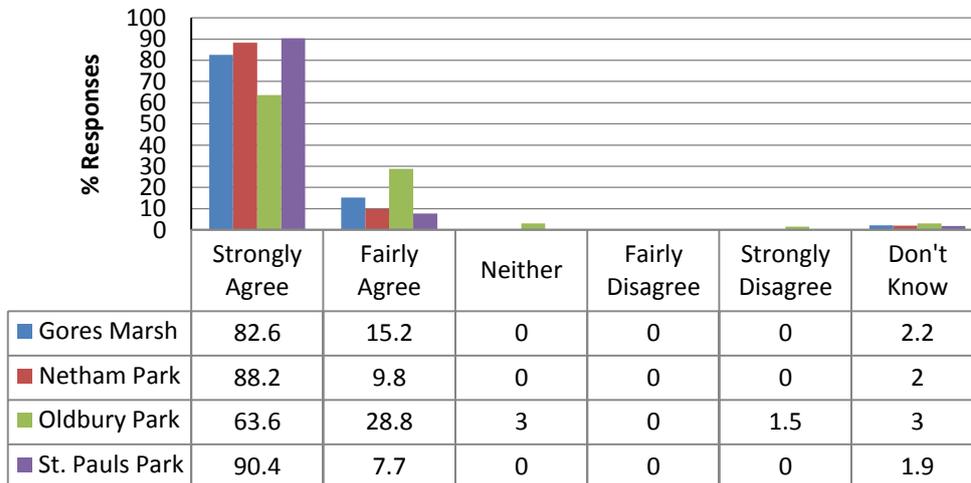


Table 5: Accessibility of play area

Maintenance of Routes

- The new play area/park is clean and well maintained

5.4. Table 6 shows that a joined average of 79.6% of respondents *strongly or fairly agreed* that the new play areas/parks are clean and well maintained. The table also highlighted that St. Paul's responses showed a higher percentage of *fairly disagree, neither agree or disagree and strongly disagree* than the other playgrounds.

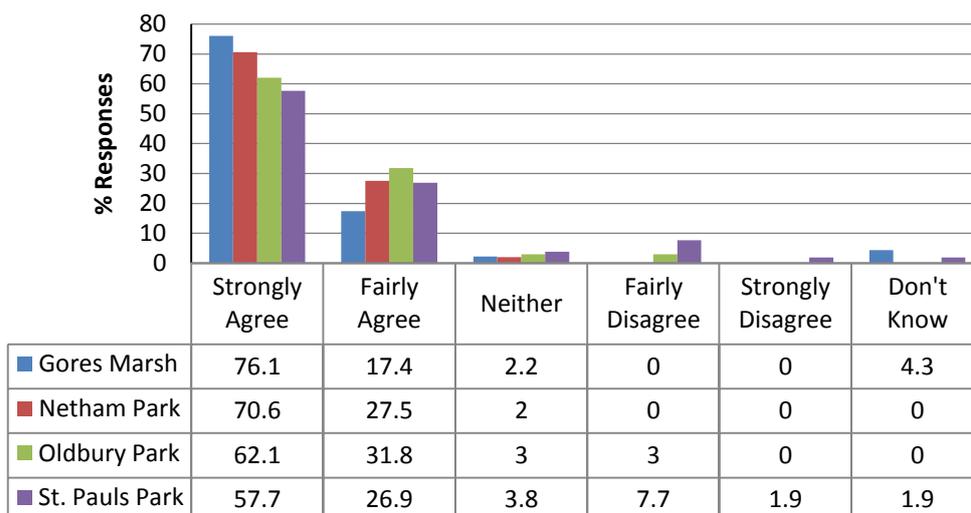


Table 6: Maintenance of play area

Adaptability of access in relation to usage

- Children can easily find their way around the play area

5.5. Based on the statistical data shown in Table 7 it was evident that most respondents (94.6%) agreed that children could easily find their way around the play area. This percentage includes the categories *strongly agree* (75.3%) and *fairly agree* (19.4%) responses. Amongst, Netham Park participants, only 2% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

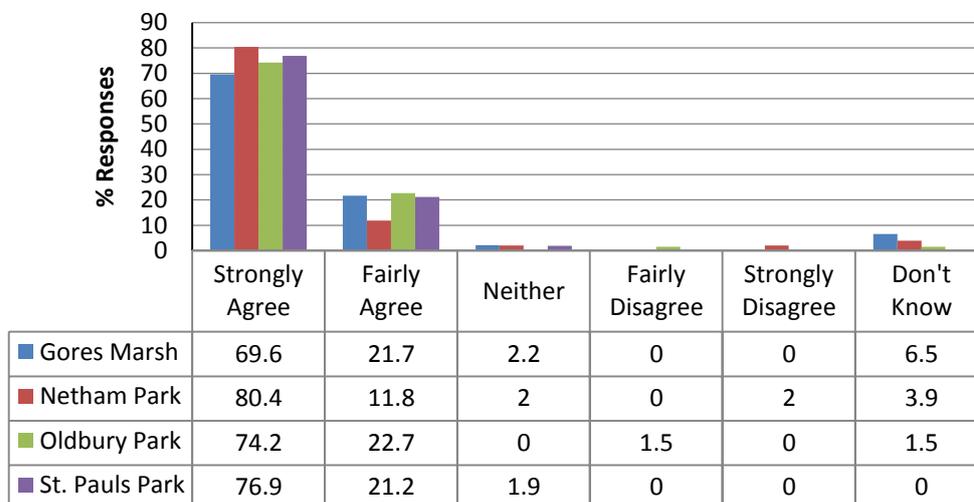


Table 7: Adaptability of access in relation to usage of play area by children

Intimidation and violence between different age groups or social groups of children versus youth

- The play area allows children and young people of different ages to play together

5.6. Table 8 demonstrates that the majority of respondents, 89.5%, either strongly or fairly agreed with the statement "the new play area allows children and young people of different ages to play together". Netham Park counts showed a significant percentage (9.8%) of fairly disagree responses, while Gores Marsh counts of don't know answers were a significant 8.7%.

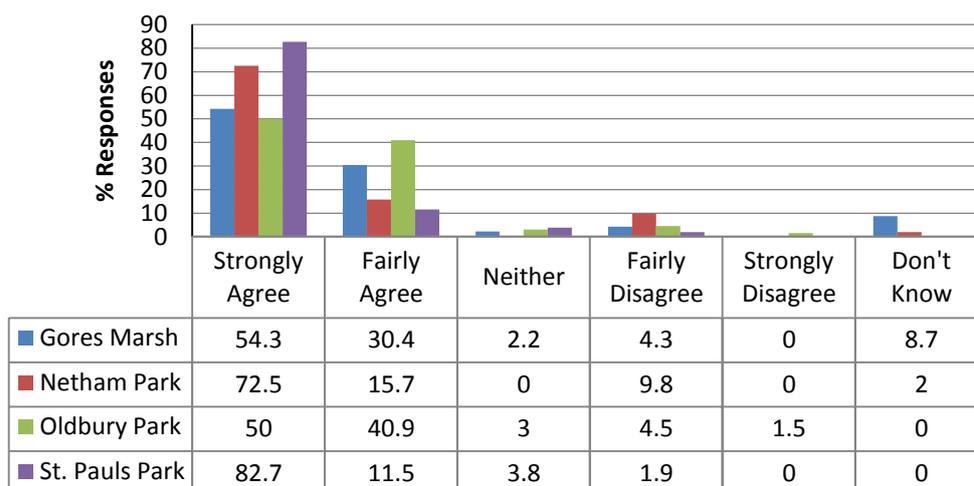


Table 8: Play area allows children of different age groups to play together

Degree of success of inclusiveness

Degree of success of inclusiveness

6.1. Playing in Parallel report challenged the play sector to encourage children from all backgrounds and ethnicities making the best use of the play opportunities on offer.

Success in engaging hard to reach groups through proactive work

Disabled children

- The play areas are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children

6.2. Descriptive statistics in Table 9 revealed that most respondents (65.8%) were positive that the play areas are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children. A small proportion of respondents (2.3%) did not agree, either fairly or strongly, that the play areas are accessible to disabled and non-disabled children. Lack of knowledge or experience in accessibility and disability terms may contribute to these appreciations and to a higher number of *don't know* answers, as is the case of Gores Marsh *don't know* counts (17.4%).

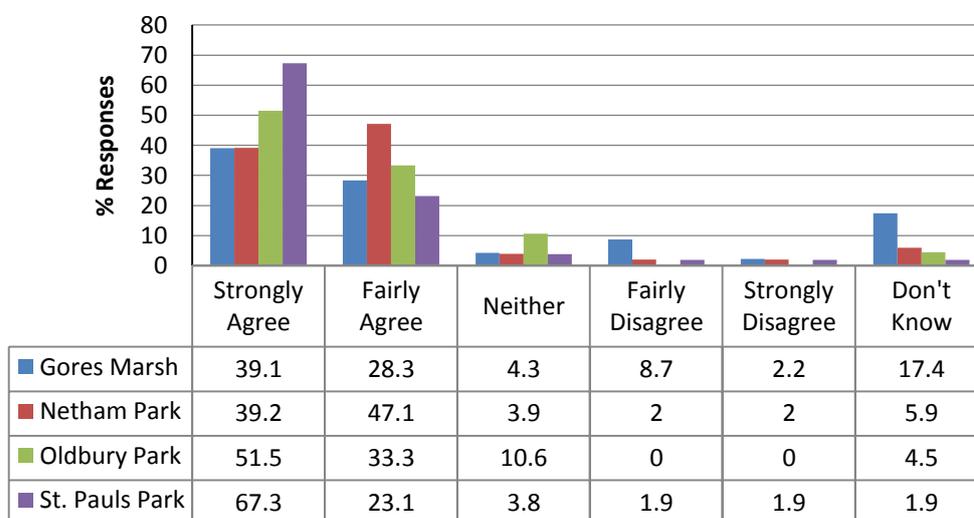


Table 9: Play area accessible to disable and non disabled children

- The play areas offer provision for children with disabilities to participate successfully in their play

6.3. When asked whether the play areas offered provision for children with disabilities to participate successfully in their play, less than 43.7% agreed, either strongly or fairly, with the statement. Table 10 shows that the highest percentages of *strongly agree* (23.1%) and *fairly agree* (40.4%) responses were obtained in St. Paul's park. The statistical analysis highlighted that options *neither* (17.4%), *fairly disagree* (11%) and *strongly disagree* (10.8%) had significant counts, suggesting that some participants differ with this statement. There was an elevated number of *don't know* responses (in average 17.2%) , especially in Gores Marsh (28.3%) and Netham Park (25.5%).

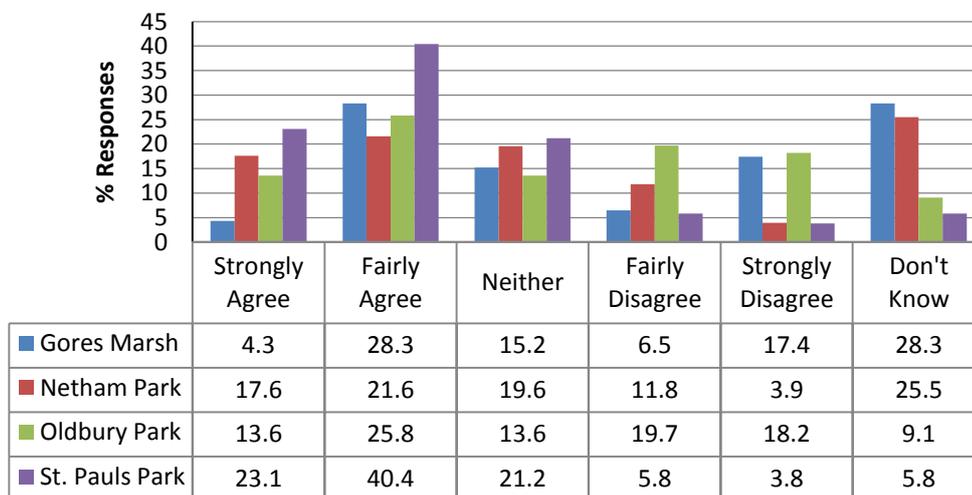


Table 10: Play area offers provision for disabled children to participate in play

Older children

- The play areas are also suitable for teenagers' use

6.4. Table 11 shows that 55.7% of participants believed that the play areas are also suitable for teenagers' use. This proportion includes the categories of *strongly agree* (28.9%) and *fairly agree* (26.9%). Netham Park and St. Paul's completed surveys showed a higher number of *strongly agree* and *fairly agree* responses. Gores Marsh responses obtained equal number of *fairly agree*, *neither agree or disagree* and *fairly disagree* and also the highest number of *don't know* answers. Oldbury Court showed the highest number of *fairly disagree* and *strongly disagree*.

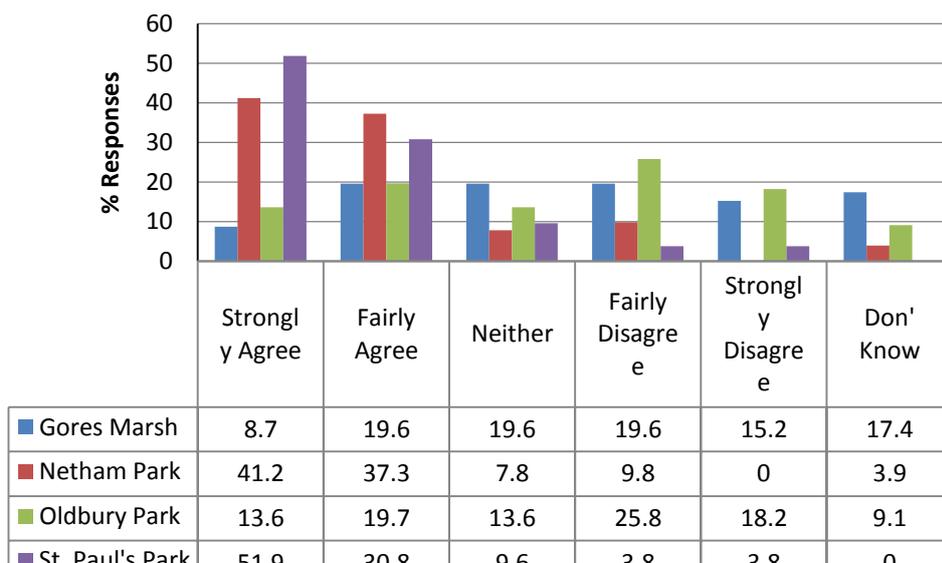


Table 11: Suitability of Play area for teenagers' use

Ethnic minorities

6.5. In 2003, the Audit Commission reported a national shortage of play provision for disabled children. Therefore it is important that Bristol Play Pathfinder addresses access and inclusion of disabled children in the improved play provision. The results suggest a high level of satisfaction with the programme in making the play areas more accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children. There was a high level of agreement that the programme offered good provision for children with disabilities to participate successfully in their play.

6.6. The Playing in Parallel report(2002) challenged the play sector to cast a critical eye on its progress and practices regarding encouraging children from all backgrounds and ethnicities to make best use of the play opportunities on offer. There is evidence to suggest that the Bristol Play Pathfinder programme had a positive impact in attracting children and parents from ethnic minority background. However this result was not confirmed in the case of St Agnes. This is possibly because it is a small community playground, and children attracted to this play area reflect the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood.

- **The play areas attract children and parents from ethnic minority background**

6.7. Overall, 68.5% of participants agreed, either strongly or fairly, that the play areas attract children and parents from ethnic minority backgrounds. After comparing results, St. Paul's showed the highest percentage of *strongly agree* responses (96.2%), followed by *fairly agree* and *neither agree or disagree* which ranked equally at 1.9%. Table 12 highlights a general concurrence to this statement. Netham Park and Oldbury Court showed a high percentage of *strongly agree* answers as well, but contrary to St. Paul's Park, the second highest response was *fairly agree* with 13.7% and 21.2% respectively.

6.8. Descriptive statistics also highlighted that a large number of participants had no experience or knowledge of users from ethnic minorities background in Gores Marsh (52.2%), followed by Netham Park (25.5%) and Oldbury Court (18.2%).

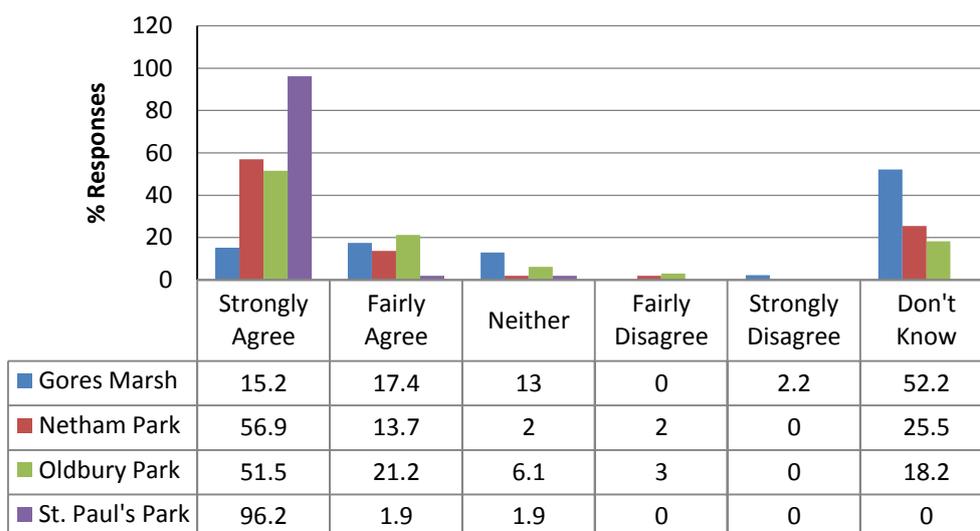


Table 12: Play area attracts children and adults from ethnic minority background

Risk, safety and challenge

7.1. Concerns about children's outdoor play have recently become centred on debates about the provision of adequate play facilities (in terms of quality and quantity), and on the ability of children to play safely free from the risk of accidents, and traffic 'killer car', and/or 'stranger dangers'. A recent report by Play Day (2008) Risk and Play highlighted the importance of safety in play provision. It also stressed the need to consider the role of risk in play. It suggested that opportunities need to be created for children to challenge themselves physically, socially and emotionally. The Play Pathfinder in Bristol sought to address the issue of safety, risk and challenge in the improved play provision.

Role of formal and informal supervision

- The design of the play areas facilitate informal supervision from nearby houses and roads

7.2. Table 13 shows that 62% of respondents strongly and fairly agree with the statement "the design of the play areas facilitate informal supervision from nearby houses and roads". The highest number of *strongly disagree* responses were obtained in Oldbury Court (60.6%), which may be due to the fact that the play area is located at a distance from neighbouring houses and is concealed by trees, which impair the visibility from the residential area. Participants who do not live in the studied area may have contributed to don't know answers.

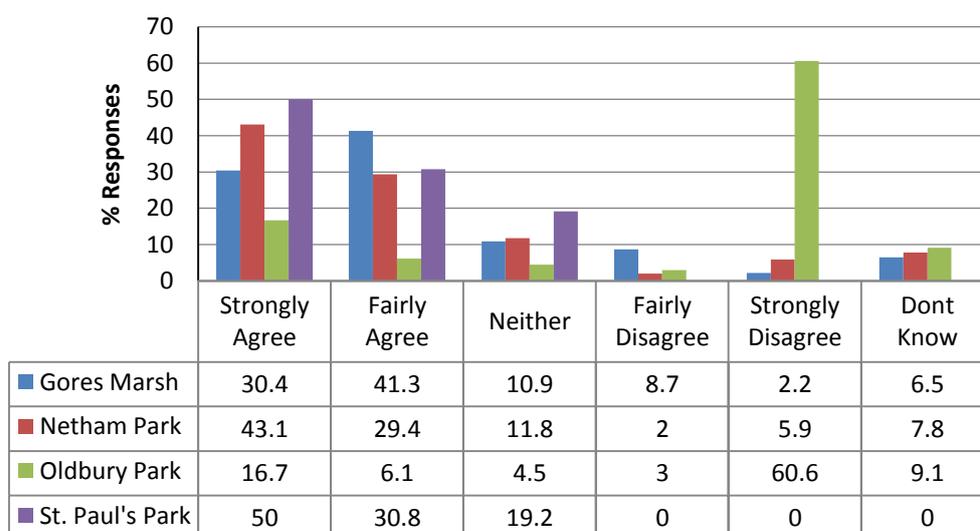


Table 13: Informal supervision from nearby houses and roads



Figure 1: Informal supervision from nearby houses in Gores Marsh

- The play areas offer a variety of on-site adults' supervision

- 7.3. Table 14 shows that a combined proportion (strongly agree and fairly agree categories) of 60.4% of participants were positive about the ability of the play areas to offer a variety of on-site adults' supervision. Strongly agree responses were higher in Netham Park (58.8%) and St. Paul's parks (44.2%). On the other hand, Oldbury Park showed the highest percentage of strongly disagree (37.9%), followed by fairly agree (27.3%) and strongly agree (22.7%) responses.
- 7.4. In Gores Marsh Park, strongly agree and fairly agree had equal number of responses with a rate of 26.1% each, followed by don't know and neither agree or disagree, which may be due to the lack of play rangers and volunteer groups.
- 7.5. It is important to highlight that although adult supervision and organised activities are available in Netham Park, Oldbury Court and St. Paul's, 28.8% of participants in St. Paul's responded don't know to this statement; this particular finding implies that park users should be better informed about the availability of these activities and alternative adult supervision.

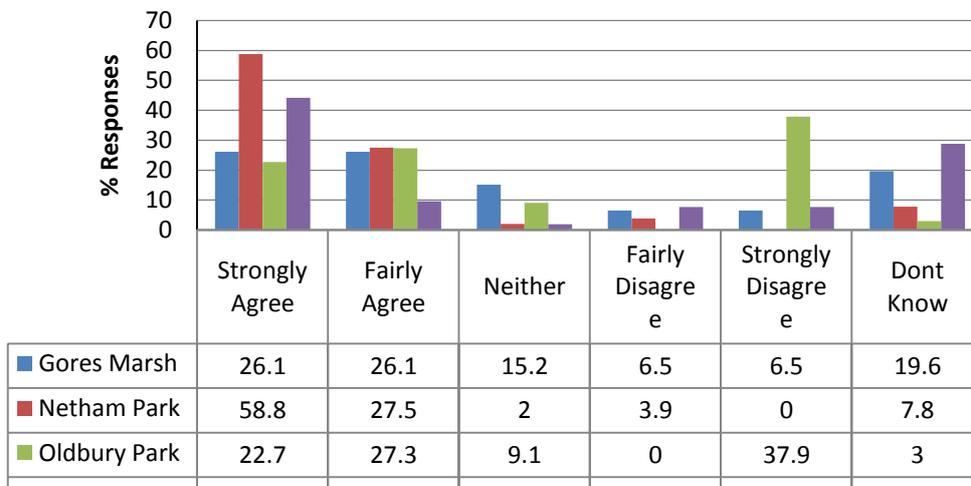


Table 14: Variety of On-site adult supervision

- If the play areas were staffed by play workers, it will increase the feeling of safety

- 7.6. Descriptive statistics for this statement shows that a 54.7% of respondents were convinced that if the areas were staffed by play workers, it will increase the feeling of safety as illustrated on Table 15. In Netham Park, Oldbury Court and St. Paul's Park the highest number of responses were strongly agree. In Gores Marsh responses ranged from 28.3% of fairly disagree, followed by fairly agree (21.7%) and neither agree or disagree (17.4%).
- 7.7. In Gores Marsh (17.4%), Netham park (19.6%) and St. Paul's (15.4%) Don't know responses shown significant percentages, but in Oldbury Court this category only achieved 1.5%, suggesting that as a destination park, users may feel safer with the presence of play workers.

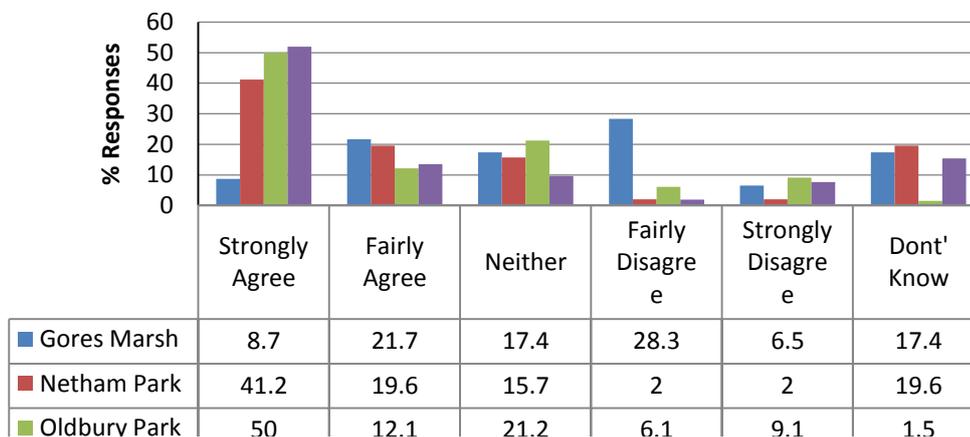


Table 15: Play workers and increase in feeling of safety

Provision of safe 'hanging out' place for young people

- What is your main reason for using the local park?

- 7.8. Statistical analysis results highlighted on Table 16 demonstrate that an average 61.5% of participants stated that their reason for using their local park is for children to play, followed by walking and dog walking. A high percentage of Gores Marsh park users (73.9%) come to this area mainly for *children playing*; the other activities achieved lower counts than in other parks. In Netham Park a high number of respondents (19.8%) use the park for *walking*, but the highest ranking was *children playing* with 55.6%. In St. Paul's, *socialising* and *hanging out* together make up 35.7% of responses, which is notably higher than the other playgrounds.

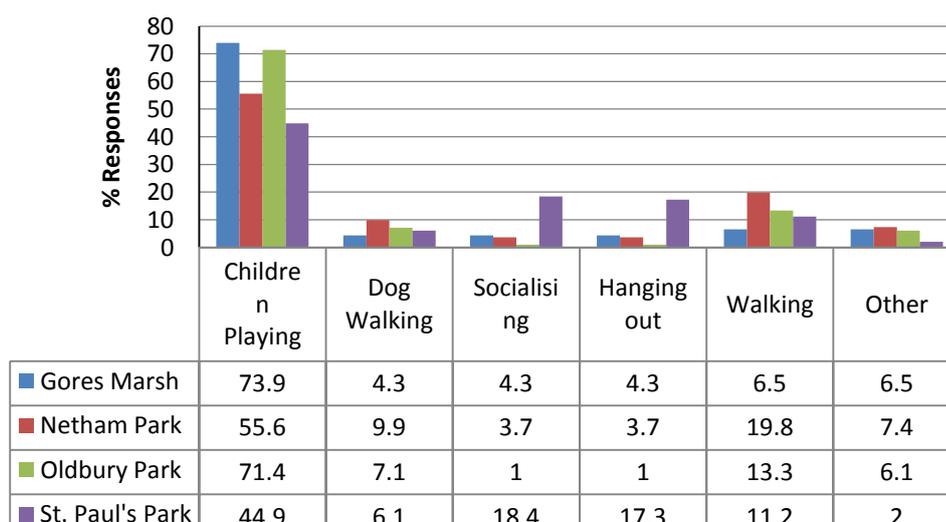


Table 16: Reason for using Local Park

Impact on anti-social behaviour and vandalism

- Improvements have helped to reduce anti-social behaviour

7.9. Table 17 shows that only around 36% of respondents believed that the improvements have helped to reduce anti-social behaviour. Although a high number of *strongly agree* and *fairly agree* responses, *Neither agree* nor *disagree* categories had significant counts in Netham park (19.6%) and Gores Marsh park (11.8%). A high number of *don't know* responses were obtained in Gores Marsh (45.7%), Netham Park (51%) and Oldbury Court (51.5%). As the programme has been implemented for only a short period of time, it may be possible that these respondents were unsure about the effectiveness of the scheme in helping to reduce anti-social behaviour.

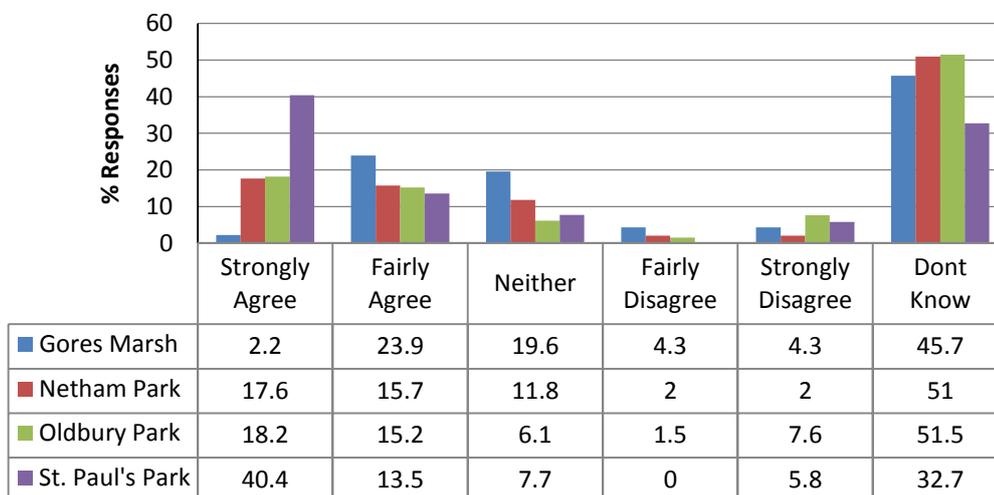


Table 17: Reduction of anti-social behaviour with improvements to play area

Effectiveness in managing risk and challenge in play provision

- The play areas are challenging and has built in opportunities for children to take risks

7.10. Descriptive statistics shown in Table18 highlighted that strongly agree and fairly agree responses achieved the highest percentages of all categories with an average 57.45% and 22.7% respectively and a combined 80.2% of agree responses. In St. Paul's, respondents, either, strongly or fairly agreed, by 92.3% with this statement. Gores Marsh, which is the playground with less play equipment, achieved the lowest number of strongly agree and fairly agree responses with a joint 58%.

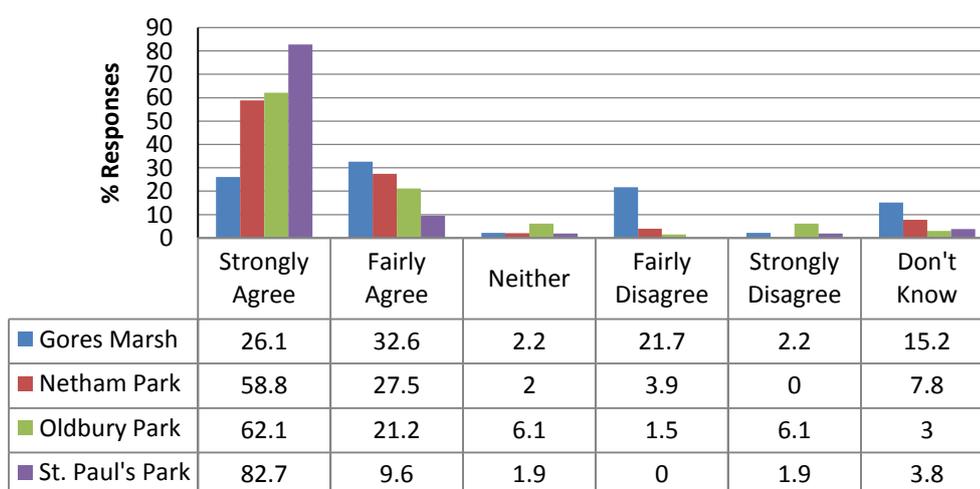


Table 18: Play area – challenging for children to take risks

Addressing parental fears and concerns about safety (i.e. stranger danger, traffic, drugs, violence.)

- The play equipment in play areas is safe

7.11. Almost 87% of respondents believed that the play equipment in the play areas is safe. *Strongly agree* and *fairly agree* responses jointly achieved the highest proportion (Gores Marsh 78.3%, Netham Park 82.4%, Oldbury Court 91% and St. Paul's 96.2%) as shown on Table 19.

This table also shows that in Gores Marsh and Netham Park a significant 13% and 11.8%, respectively, of *don't know* answers was obtained, which may suggest that users are not familiar with the new equipment.

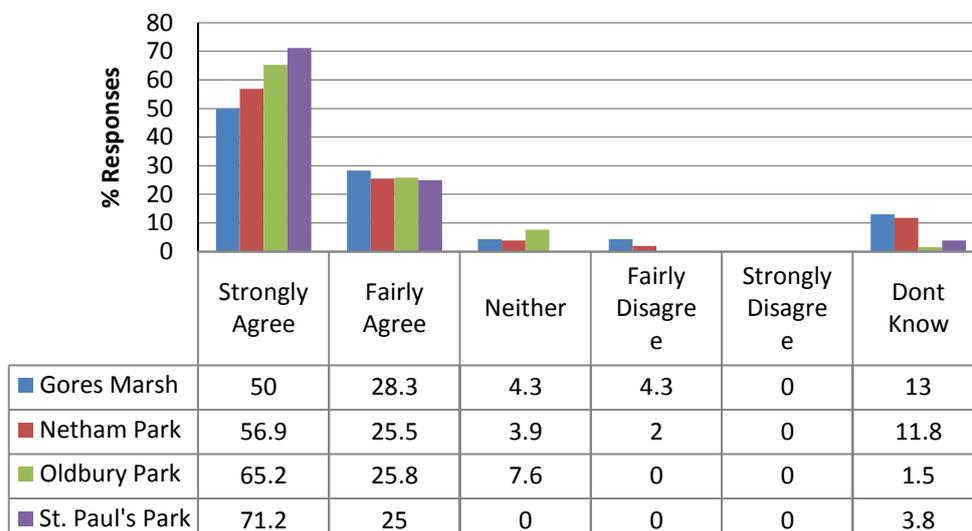


Table 19: Play equipment - safety

- The play areas are safe from traffic

7.12. Results on Table 20 revealed that 95.1% of respondents believed that the play areas are safe from traffic. The highest scores were achieved in the categories *strongly agree* and *fairly agree* with 83.7% and 11.4% respectively.

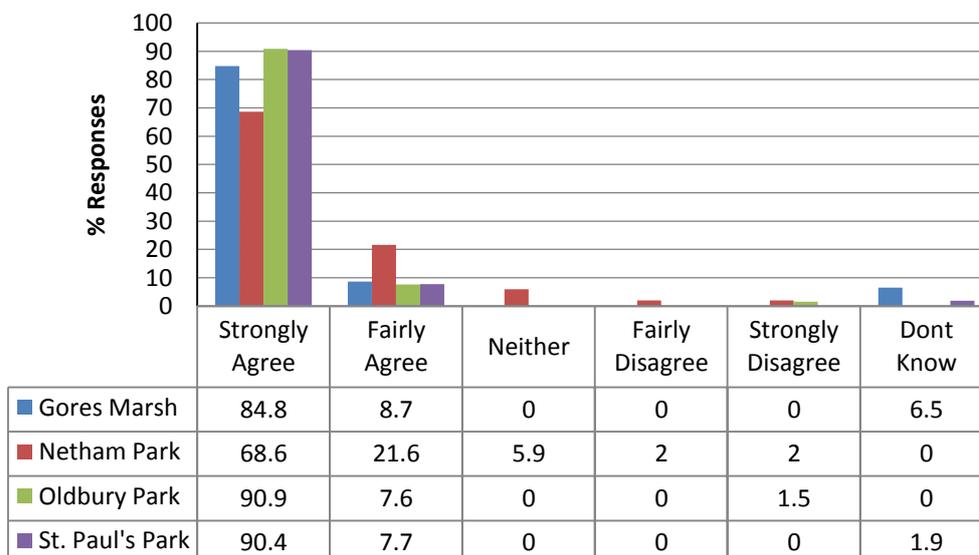


Table 20: Play area – safe from traffic

Playability of play spaces

- 8.1. In 2008, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) published *Designing and Planning for Play* to encourage a different approach to playground design. CABE asked local authorities to shift the design approach of the play areas from 'bland playgrounds' to exciting and distinctive new play spaces that foster imaginative play and creativity. CABE sought to persuade local authorities to embed a level of risk and challenge in child play, and foster the use of natural play design.
- 8.2. In response to these recommendations, Play England has developed new design guidelines for play areas. ('A Design for Play - Guide to Creating Successful Play Schemes' and 'Inclusion by Design - A Guide to Creating Accessible Play and Childcare Environments'). The delivery of design innovation has become a key requirement of the Pathfinder project as set out in the grant conditions and grant advice. The Play Pathfinder programme stressed the need to deliver creative design solutions, focused on providing a satisfactory play experience. Providing clear information and orientation, as well as catering for various user groups, were difficult challenges for the playground designers.

Degree of playability of play spaces

Promotion of variety of play activities

- There is a good balance between play equipment and space for free play

- 8.3. Table 21 shows that a high proportion of respondents (93.3%), were positive about the good balance between play equipment and space for free play. The categories strongly agree and fairly agree achieved 66.2% and 27.1% respectively.

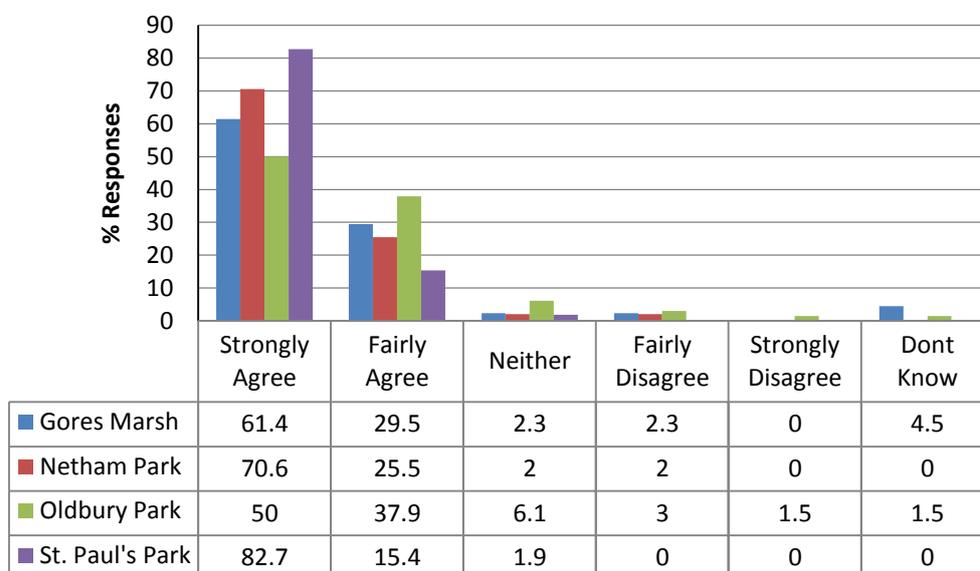


Table 21: Balance between play equipment and space for free play

- The play area makes good use of natural elements

8.4. Regarding the statement “the play area makes good use of natural elements,” a high proportion of respondents (92.7%) strongly or fairly agreed that the play area design makes good use of natural elements (Table 22).

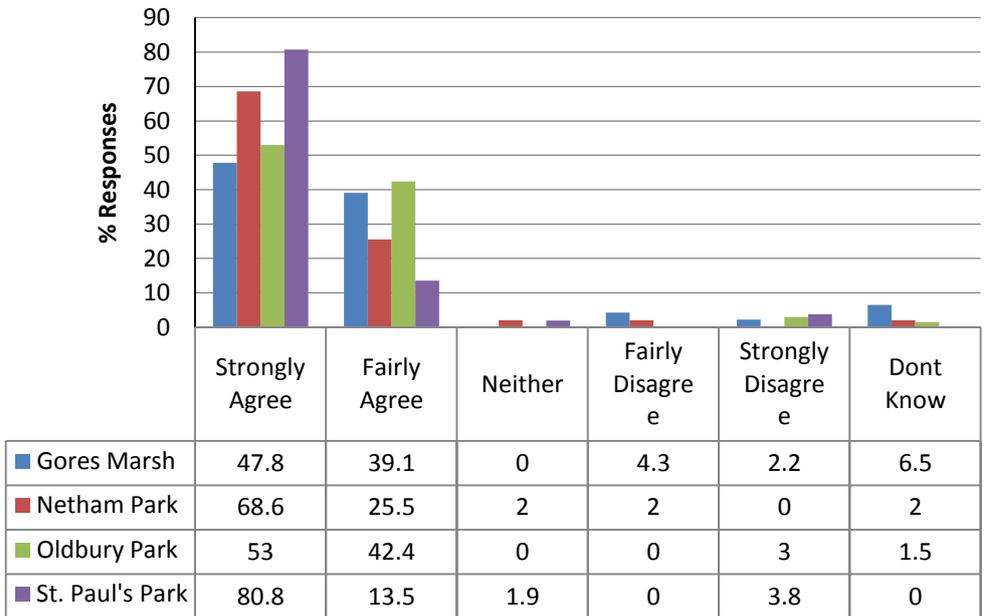


Table 22: Play area- good use of natural elements

- The materials used in the new play area added to its quality

8.5. Regarding the statement “The materials used in the new play area added to its quality,” 71.6% of participants strongly agreed, with a further 20.2% stating that they ‘fairly agree’ (Table 23).

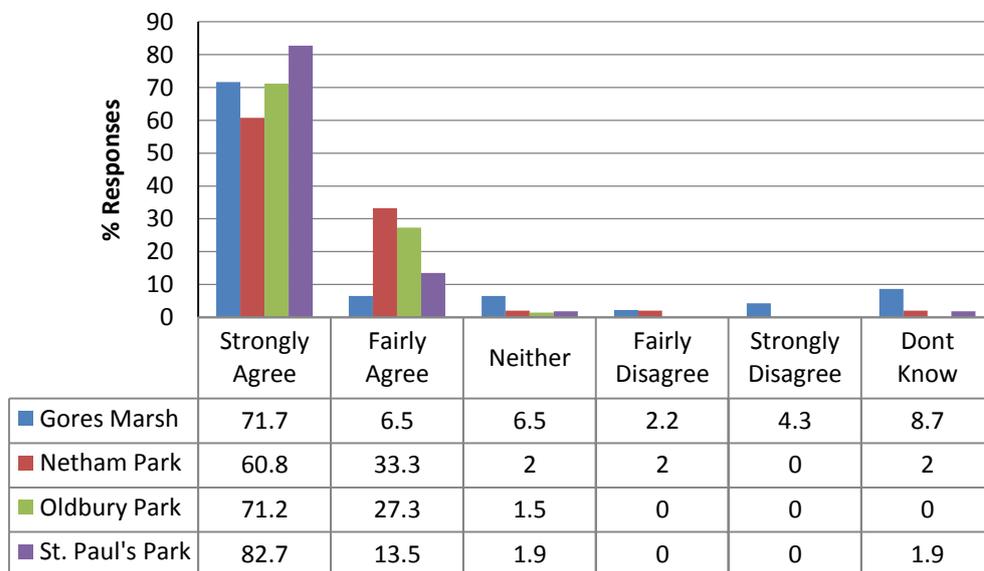


Table 23: Materials used – Quality of Play area

- The play area has flexible layout for future modifications and development

8.6. In Table 24, the tabulated counts of responses highlighted that a combined 80.4% of respondents concur that the play areas have a flexible layout that allows for future modification and development. The categories strongly agree and fairly agree achieved 62.5% and 30.4% respectively.

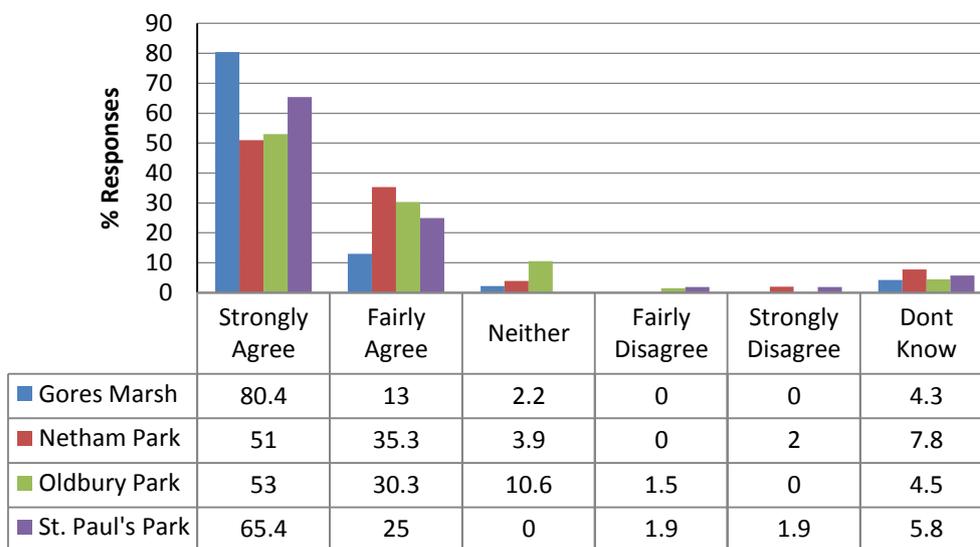


Table 24: Flexible layout for future modifications and development

Encouragement of play activities for various age groups

- Design of the play areas are aesthetically pleasing

8.7. Table 25 shows that on average 93.9% of participants agree that the design of the play areas are aesthetically pleasing (Oldbury Court 100%, St. Paul's 94.3%, Netham Park 92.1% and Gores Marsh 89.1%).

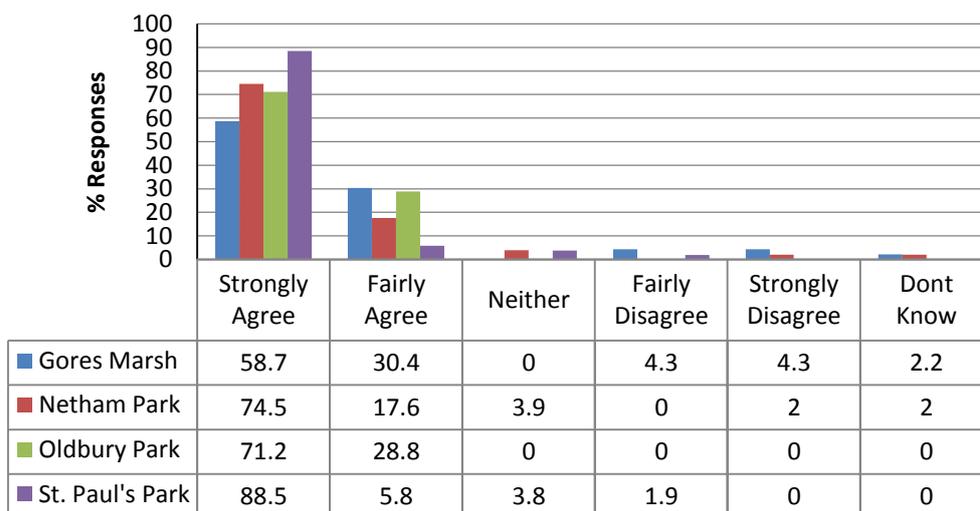


Table 25: Design is aesthetically pleasing

- My children enjoy playing on the new playground

8.8. Table 26 shows that 83.8% of respondents agreed, either strongly or fairly, that their children enjoyed playing in the New Playground. Gores Marsh Park had the lowest proportion of these categories and higher counts for neither agree or disagree, fairly agree and strongly disagree responses. Don't know responses may be attributed to participants that visit the playground for the first time.

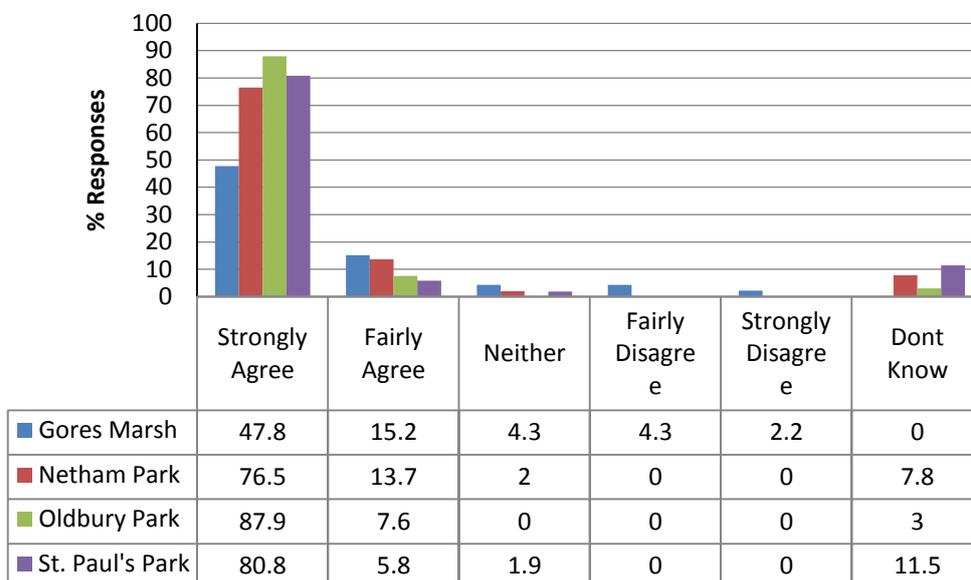


Table 26: Children enjoy playing in new playground

- The play areas are versatile and meet children's needs

8.9. Table 27 shows that a combined total of 82.5% of participants agreed that the play areas are versatile and meet children's needs. Oldbury Court and Netham Park showed similar patterns of responses, while Gores Marsh had the highest number of *fairly* and *strongly disagree* with 4.3% on each of these categories.

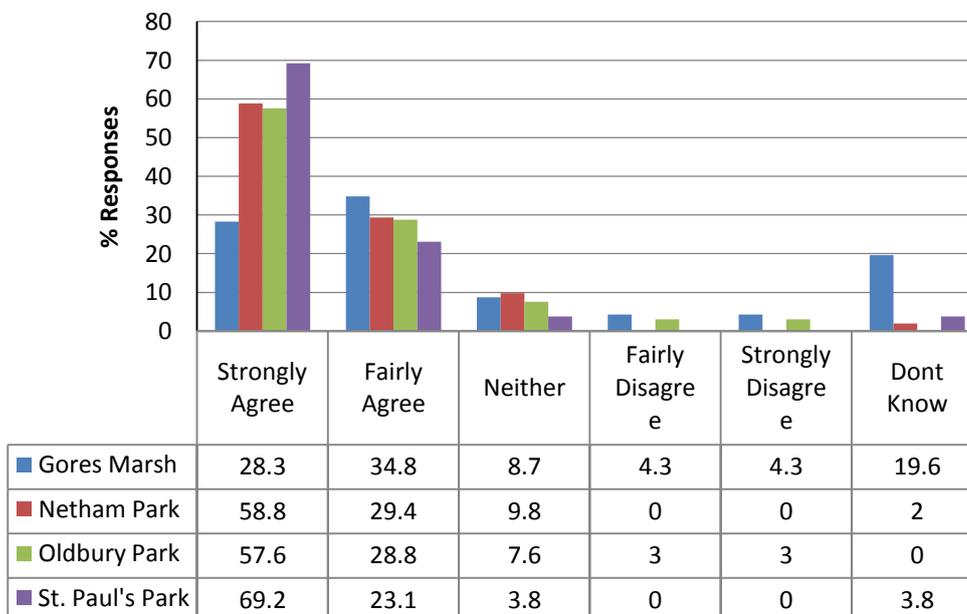


Table 27: Play area versatile to meet children's needs

- The play areas provide a wide range of play experiences

8.10. Table 28 shows that 77.5% of respondents were positive about the wide range of play experiences offered by the play areas. St. Paul's Park showed higher number of strongly agree (80.8%) and fairly agree (15.4%) responses of all the play areas, while Gores Marsh showed a lower rate of strongly agree (10.6%) and fairly agree (36.2%) and achieved higher numbers of neither, fairly disagree and strongly disagree.

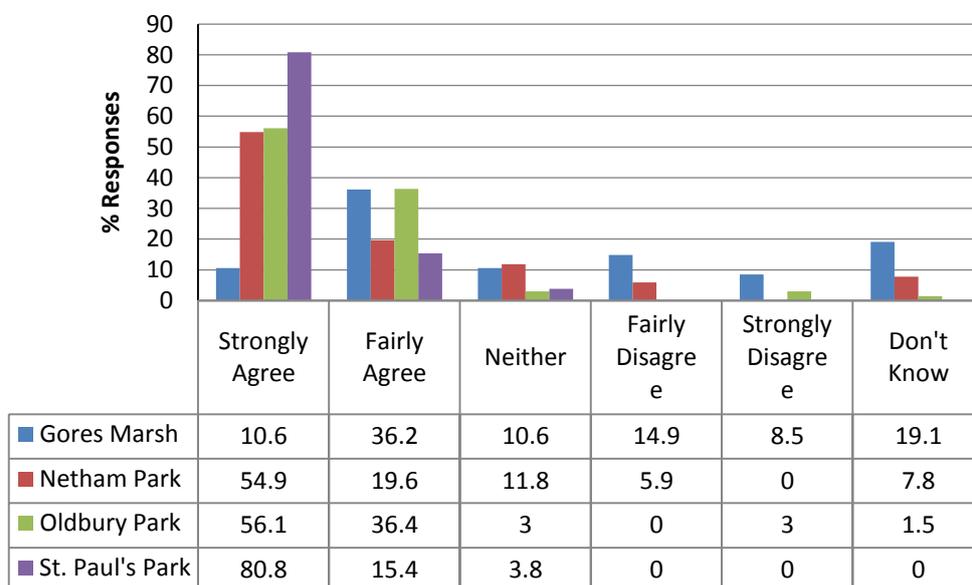


Table 28: Play area – wide range of play experience

Promotion of social interactions

8.11. The Mental Health Foundation (1999) highlighted the importance of children having opportunities to make and consolidate friendships and deal with conflicts, all of which promote mental health. Available evidence suggests that play is a powerful medium that enables children to make and consolidate friendships. A study by the Children’s Society (2007) revealed that friendship is a major indicator of well-being. Yet the proportion of young children who say they have no best friend has risen from around one in eight to about one in five since 1986 (The Children’s Society, 2007). Providing opportunities for social interaction in the new play areas is a key challenge for the programme.

- **The play areas are used by the community and visitors**

8.12. Table 29 highlights that a joint 79.4% of participants confirmed that the play areas are used by the community and visitors. This proportion of respondents chose the strongly (52.7%) and fairly (26.7%) agree options. An indicative percentage of don’t know answers (17.1%) may indicate that some participants are unfamiliar with both the play space and other park users’ provenance.

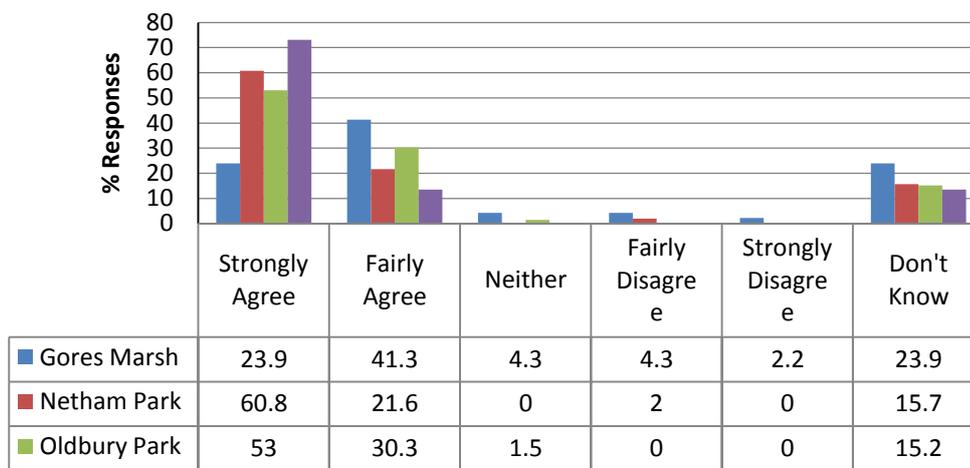


Table 29: Play area – use by community and visitors

- **Did your child make new friends since the play area has been improved?**

8.13. Analysis of the responses regarding this statement (Table 30) highlighted that all together over 46% of parents reported that their child made at least one new friend as a result of the improvements to the new play areas. 37.8% of parents confirmed that their children made 2 friends or more, and 18.8% affirmed that their children more than 3 friends. St Agnes Park achieved 36.5% of *more than 3* and 19.2% of *between 2 and 3*, which is indicative that increased interaction between children has improved since the developments; Gores Marsh Park showed the highest number of *none* answers with 58.7%.

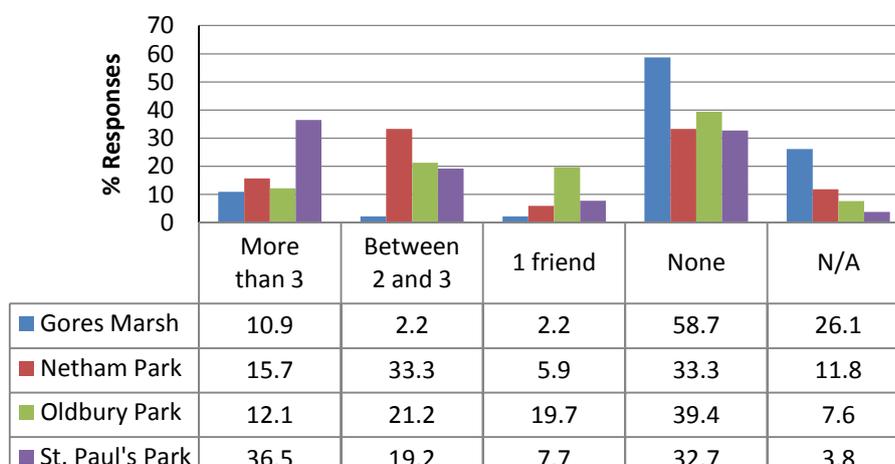


Table 30: Improvement of Play area – increased interaction between children

Sustaining play (frequency)

Observation Counts

8.14. Comparing observation counts for these play areas (Table 31), we can conclude that Oldbury Court is the most visited of all, followed by St. Paul’s, Netham Park and Gores Marsh. Regarding the presence of unaccompanied children, statistical analysis of the observation counts revealed that St Paul’s Park has a significant difference to the others; this community park is traditionally used as place for children to frequent while their parents are at work. The presence of the Children Centre and the activities organised by different youth and children centres exacerbate the increased number of children without accompanying adults. In the other parks the ratio of adults per children is approximately 1:2 (one adult per two children).

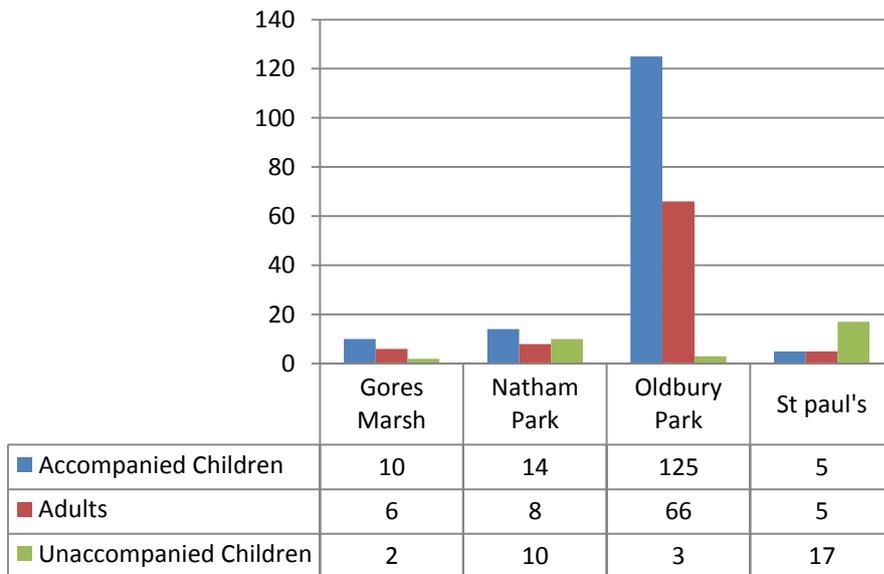


Table 31: Mean frequency of Play area occupancy

- My child plays on the new playground more often now than before the improvement

8.15. Overall, 69.2% of participants confirmed that their child played more often in the new playgrounds, following improvements. St. Paul's Park had the highest percentage of don't know answers (28.8%) which may be due to some participants coming from other areas (Table 32).

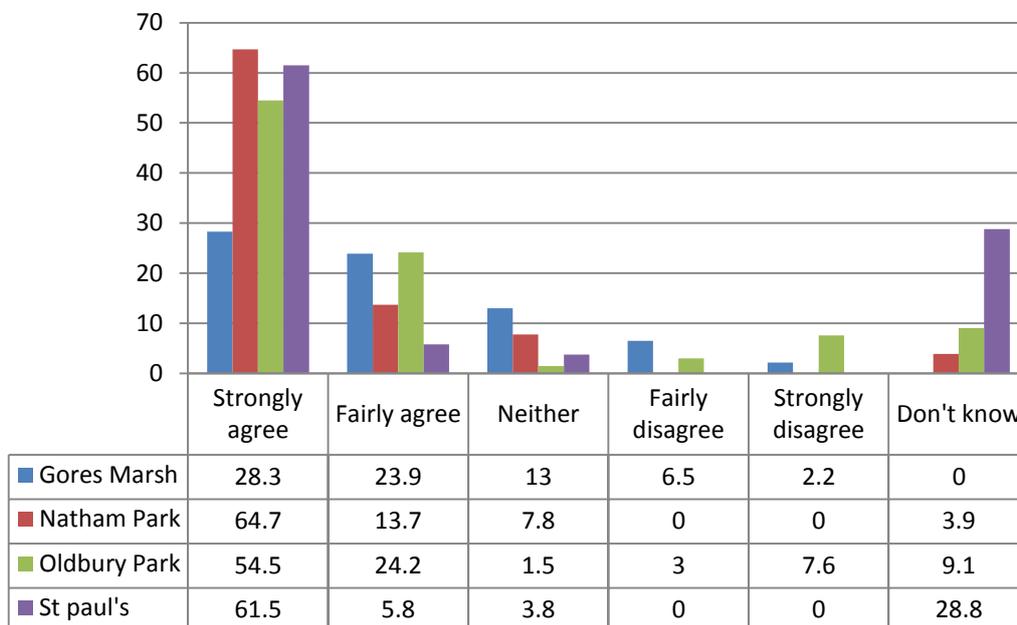


Table 32: Play area improvement – children playing more often

- How many times per week does your child play on the new playground

8.16. Table 33 highlighted that all together, 76.4% of participants' children play at least once a week on the new playground. An impressive 86.2% of participants from Natham Park confirmed that their child uses the playground at least once a week. The lowest percentage of these were obtained in Gores Marsh (71.7%).

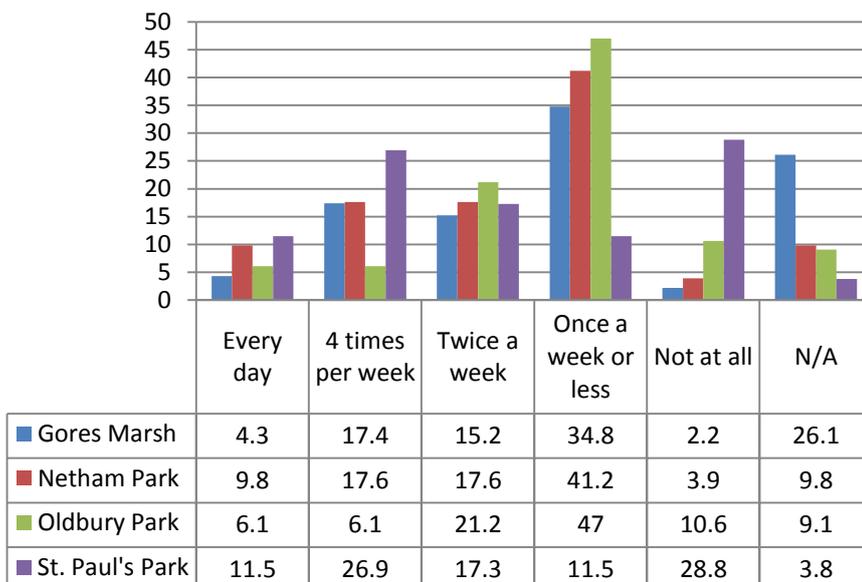


Table 33: Number of times children playing per week

- How long does your child play daily on the new playground?

8.17. Research investigated whether the amount of time children spend outdoors is correlated to their physical activity levels and being overweight. For instance, Cleland et al. (2008) found that children who spent a longer amount of time outside were generally more physically active and had a lower prevalence of overweight than children who

spent less time outside. It was estimated that for each additional hour older girls spent outside during the cooler months was associated with an extra 26.5 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) and that each additional hour older boys spent outside during the cooler months was associated with an extra 21 minutes of MVPA. These findings suggest that encouraging children to spend more time outdoors may help increase physical activity levels and reduce the prevalence of overweight.

8.18. The results of the statistical analysis of responses obtained regarding this question (Table 34), suggest that over 58% of children met the minimum requirements for moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA). Over 41% of parents/guardians reported that their played more than one hour daily. A proportion of 35% of parents confirmed that their child played between thirty minutes and one hour, with only 7.2% stating that their child played less than thirty minutes. Oldbury Court and St. Paul's achieved the highest counts in the categories of *more than 1 hour* and *30 min to 1 hour*, followed by Netham Park. While in Gores Marsh, *more than 1 hour* responses were only 6.5%, there was a higher count of *30 min to 1 hour*.

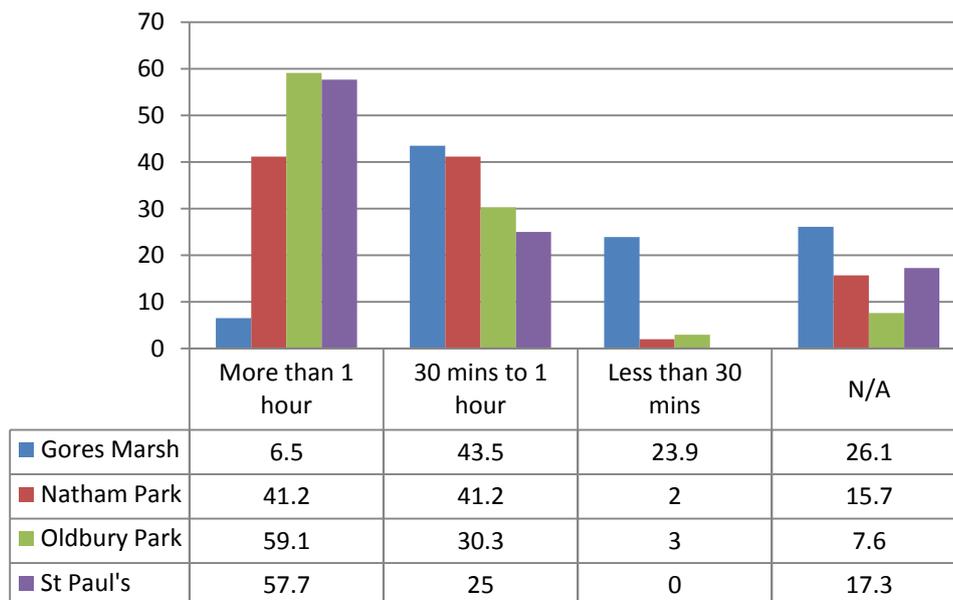


Table 34: Duration of daily play on the new playground

- **The play areas are used during week days**

8.19. Table 35 descriptive statistics regarding the play areas usage during week days revealed that overall, *often* and *very often* responses had the higher counts (37.1 % and 41.7% respectively). *Don't know* responses may be partly due to participants coming from other areas.

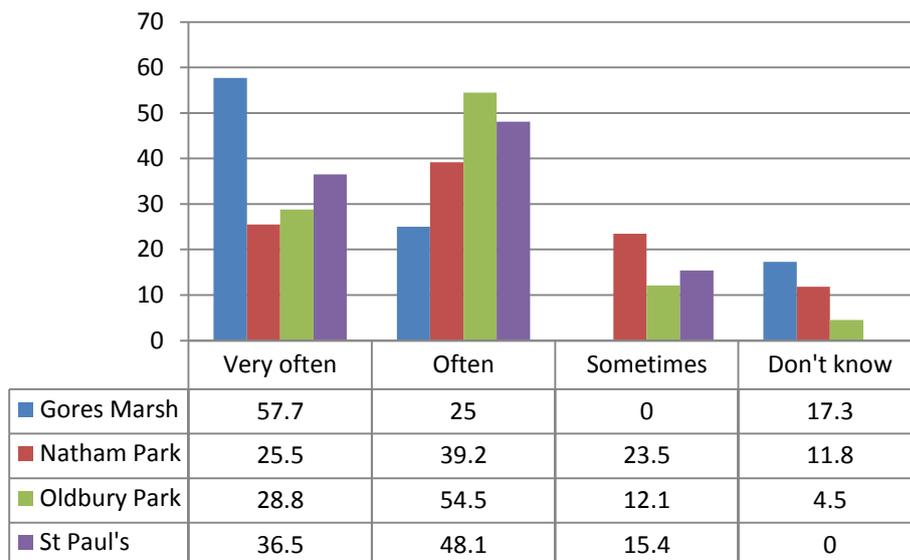


Table 35: Play area usage during week days

- **The play areas are used only during weekends**

8.20. A combined total of 85.5% of respondents confirmed that the play areas are used *very often* and *often* during weekends (Table 36). *Very often* counts in Oldbury Court and St. Paul's Park were over 75%, followed by Natham Park with 52.9% and Gores Marsh with a very low rate of 4.3%, but with a high count of *Often* responses (71.7%). *Don't know* percentages in Oldbury Court (7.6%) and Natham Park (11.8%) may be due to the fact that some participants are visitors from other areas.

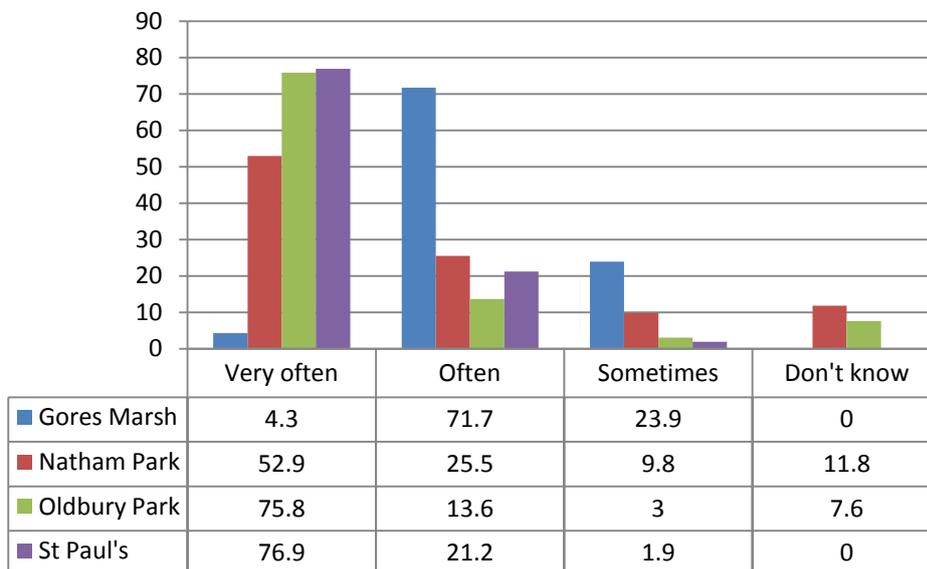


Table 36: Play area usage during weekends

Number of Visitors/Weather Conditions

8.21. Statistical analysis of the observation results indicate that weather conditions can affect the number of visitors especially when there is *light rain* or *rain*. When weather is sunny or partially sunny the number of users seems to be higher.

The incidence of number of visitors with respect to weather conditions is represented in the following table:

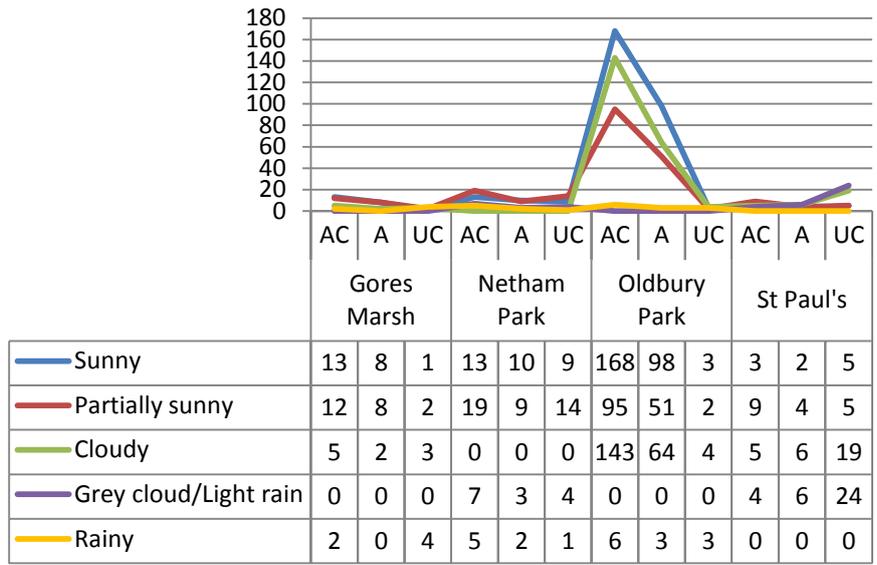


Figure 2: Number of Visitors in different weather conditions

AC	Accompanied children
A	Adults
UC	Unaccompanied children

Effectiveness of Play Rangers

Effectiveness of Play Rangers and volunteer groups' involvement

- 9.1. This section presents the findings of the assessment of the influence of Play Rangers on children's play and the encouragement of children to make more use of parks and open spaces in Netham Park.
 - 9.2. In Netham Park, one team of up to four play rangers was working with children. The team operated on an 'open access' principle, meaning that children were free to come and go as they please as there was no registration required. By being present in the park Play Rangers ensure that children are kept safe, yet at the same time provide opportunities for them to be challenged, take risks and have fun outdoors. Only when the weather was too cold for children to play outdoors, during autumn and winter months, they have organised play activities in Pavilion.
 - 9.3. Generally, Play Rangers facilitated open access play in the park, and provided advice on play activities. It was apparent that the fundamental of such play provision is the work with the local people, parents and children working together to ensure children play out. Some parents and carers were present and involved in the play organised by Play Rangers.
 - 9.4. The Play Rangers team was equipped with sports, games, ideas and worked to help the children find fun things to do and to reassure parents that it is safe for children to play out. They worked to allow children to develop their own ideas of what to do and how to play. They also intervened to prevent harm, but it was apparent that they cannot manage every aspect of children's behaviour. Thus, in cases when some children's behaviour was disruptive, they would separate these children from the group and involve them in a different activity.
- **Play Rangers influence on children's play**
 - 9.5. Some activities organised by the Play Rangers have had a carefully controlled element of risk as part of physical play, but they have ensured there were no hidden hazards. For example, in spring months we observed Play Rangers organising play in the woods on the edge of the park. The project was very 'nature inclusive' and involved a high number of children age between 8 and 11. Play Rangers activities included connecting a big hammock between trees and setting up a small log fire. Children used the hammock as a swing and were supervised by two Play Rangers all the time. Children were focused and challenged, but not pushed beyond their capabilities. The Play Rangers encouraged children to climb into the hammock and swing it. The fire was set for the roasting of marshmallows and carefully supervised by a Play Ranger.

Figure 3 Play rangers organised activities in the woody area on the edge of the Netham Park



- 9.6. A social dimension of the Play Rangers' involvement was also quite apparent. During the play activities, they provided children with role models and tried to build positive relationships through gaining children's respect and trust. This was particularly successful with young boys who came to play football and basketball in the fenced area. Usually, a couple of male Play Rangers would organise a match and take part in the small teams. If any conflict occurred during the game, the Play Rangers would intervene and mediate. The atmosphere was usually positive and children enjoyed these matches. Younger boys observing the game outside the fence were often encouraged to join in.

Figure 4: Fenced area where Play Rangers organise football or basketball matches



9.1. During the late spring and summer months we observed Play Rangers organising play on the periphery of the park; on the North area of the Netham Park (Fig. 3). Since the new playground was built, this green area is located between the fenced sport pitch and two play areas. The area is used only when Play Rangers are on duty but not much at other times. The evidence showed that Play Rangers do not normally organise the play on the new parts of the playground. They believe that their role is to help children to play freely, actively and imaginatively in all the outdoor areas, both with and without play equipment.

Figure 5: Red line demarcates the area where Play Rangers organise play during summer months.



- 9.2. When the weather permitted, Play Rangers organised water fights, supplying children with waterguns. On a day in mid June 2010, when we observed this play there were between 20 and 32 children involved in the waterfight. Children of all ages genuinely enjoyed this play which often lasted more than one hour. In addition, they used a hammock for a group sitting and swigning as well as they supported younger children in play. Some parents were also present; some took part in the play and others helped Play Rangers. Mothers with smaller children usually sit in a group and chat while older children play.
- 9.3. Although the Play Rangers initiated water play and other activities it was obvious that the play was possible to sustain only if children were interested in it. Typically the older children would stop playing and move to play on the other parts of the playground. Their play was more spontaneous than younger children's, who relied more on guidance from the Play Rangers.
- 9.4. This evaluation can provide no quantitative information as to whether there were any differences in responses and participation in play initiated by Play Rangers between boy's and girl's involvement. Our observation showed that nearly equal number of both gender took part in the activities. However, what was evident was the age of children involved. Children over the age of 11 do not normally take part in the play organised by the Play Rangers. The majority of children participating were between the age of 5 and 10.

- **Parents' opinions**

- 9.5. The analysis showed that the Play Rangers succeeded in creating safe and fun play activities. Parents of children taking part in the Play Rangers activities commented that they felt confident about children's safety and that small number of accidents which happened in the past were dealt with efficiently.
- 9.6. Parents were also appreciative of the range of opportunities offered by the Play Rangers. For example, helping children to play in the woods instead of the indoor soft play areas.
- 9.7. They considered formal play equipment and facilities on the playground very useful, but value the natural, outdoor spaces for opportunities for adventure and imagination.

Assessing Play Rangers Involvement in Safeguarding and Encouraging Children's Play Activities

- Play rangers provide open access play sessions in this park

9.8. Table 37 highlights that 27.7% of respondents agreed, strongly or fairly, that the play rangers and voluntary groups provide open access play sessions in the parks. It also revealed that on average, more than 60% of respondents did not know about the Play Rangers' activities, which is significant. However, only in Netham Park do the Play Rangers regularly organise open access play sessions.

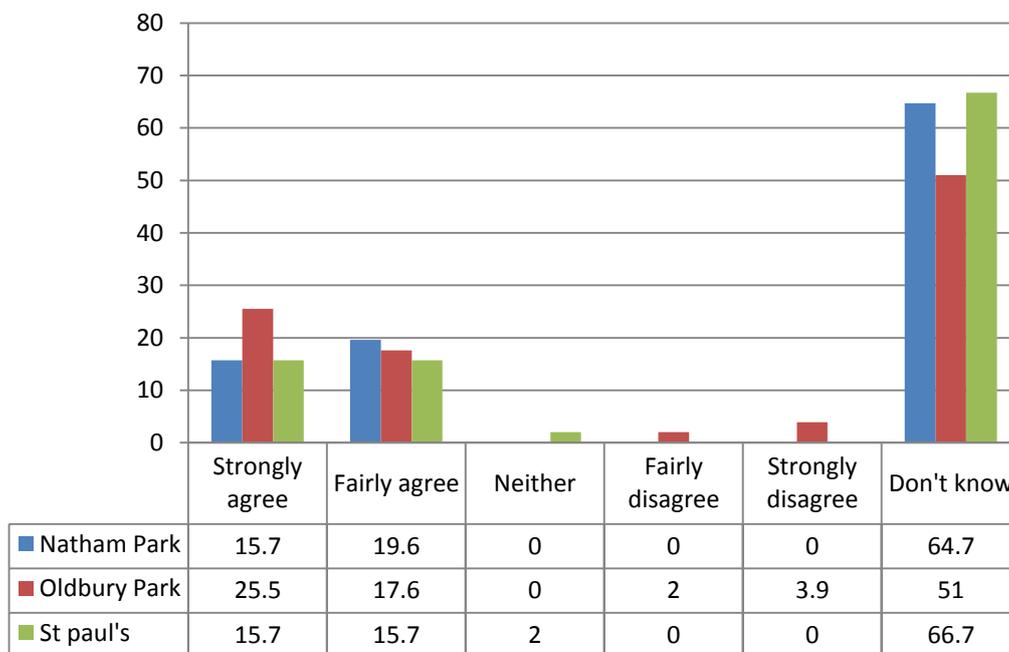


Table 37: Open access play sessions provided by play rangers and voluntary groups

Effectiveness in building community capacity

9.9. The following data was obtained through observations in Netham Park and St. Paul's Park. Results showed that the Play Rangers' effectiveness in building community capacity, directly affects the number of children using the

related playground. Organised activities and the presence of the Play Rangers increase the number of users, especially unaccompanied children (Table 38). This analysis highlighted that organised activities and play rangers presence increase the number of users, especially unaccompanied children.

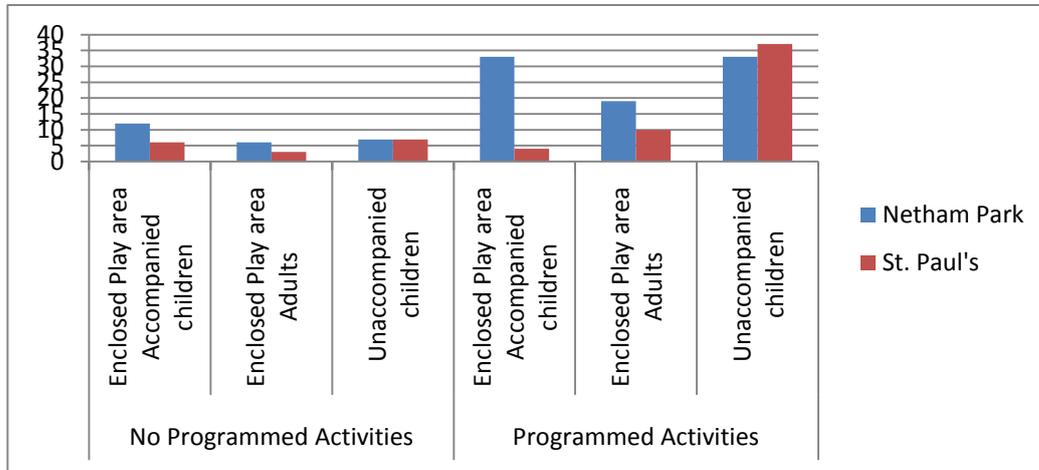


Table 38a: Effectiveness in building community capacity

	No Programmed Activities			Programmed Activities		
	Enclosed Play area Accompanied children	Enclosed Play area Adults	Unaccompanied children	Enclosed Play area Accompanied children	Enclosed Play area Adults	Unaccompanied children
Netham Park	12	6	7	33	19	33
St Paul's	6	3	7	4	10	37

Table 39b: Effectiveness in building community capacity

Count of Visitors / Special Activities Conclusion

9.10. As shown on Table 38a/b observations carried out in Netham Park and St. Paul's coincided with organised play activities and events, which, following confirmation through descriptive analysis shown above, confirmed that these activities directly affect the number of visitors, especially in the group of unaccompanied children.

Cost-benefit analysis

- 10.7. Cost benefit analysis forms an important part of the evaluation of this investment. The evidence collected here will help in quantifying and evaluating the health benefits from increased active play. This involved determining the quality of play as a result of this investment. The quality of play was assessed by the increase of play, physical activity and social interaction. The implications on children's health and well-being are also evaluated.
- 10.8. Cost benefit analysis helps in quantifying and costing the health benefits from increased active play. The quality of play was assessed by the increase of play, physical activity and social interaction.
- 10.9. NICE (2008) Promoting physical activity for children: Cost effectiveness analysis sought to provide evidence for evaluating the health benefits of play. The proposed methodology consisted of converting minutes of exercise directly into Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) gained (in the short term) based on a quality of life coefficient derived by Beale, et al. (2008). It proposed that increases in play and physical activity, and the short-term QALY per thirty minutes of exercise in a month is equivalent to 0.0027. The cost per QALY for community sports is estimated to £71,500.
- 10.10. In the Play Pathfinder programme in Bristol it was found that 76% of children were engaged for more than thirty minutes daily in active play. It was estimated that over 250 children were physically active for more than half an hour daily, which is almost 7500 hours of exercise in a month. This is equivalent to 20.25 QALY. Consequently, during the short period of use of the new play areas, the total value of the health benefits of play in the Play Pathfinder areas is estimated to £1,447,875.

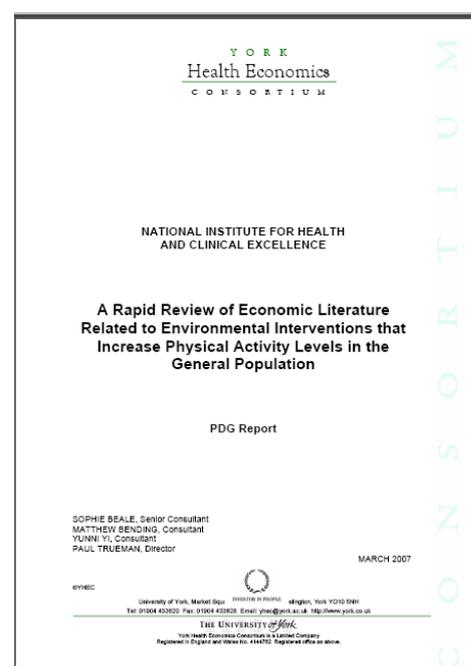


Figure 6: Nice report (2008)

- 11.1. Children's effective engagement has become widely accepted. The call to engage them in decision-making at all levels received extensive support from Government's Civil Organisation Societies, Child Rights activists as well as international bodies; such as the United Nations (UN) and Save the Children International (SCI), which led to the enactment of universal legislations such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 and was ratified by almost all countries in the world. The effect of this saw the initiation of many child focussed programmes, policies and projects directed towards promoting total engagement of all about issues that affect them and the environments in which they live (UNCRC, 1989).

Background

- 11.2. In 2008 and 2009 the Youth and Play Service at Bristol City Council conducted a consultation process concerning the investment in play opportunities provided by the Play Pathfinder programme. The general aim of this process was to involve the key stakeholders (children/young people, their families, and the local community) in the design, implementation and management of the Play Pathfinder programme. More precisely, the consultation process (as stated by the Youth and Play Service) was set up to:

- Identify needs and issues relating to the playground quality, location and purpose;
- find and negotiate ways of meeting those needs.

- 11.3. This widespread process involved children, stakeholders and members of communities living in the areas where changes will take place. The intentions were to encourage an active involvement in the decision-making process and ensure that it was representative. The consultations therefore actively engaged the following stakeholder groups the process:

- children and young people;
- parents/carers;
- near neighbourhoods to parks and play areas;
- local neighbourhood partnerships;
- parks and environmental groups;
- play agencies;
- disability organisations;
- black and minority ethnic community groups;
- amenities/friends of groups/community groups.

- 11.4. An integrated approach was used to conduct the evaluation of the consultation of process. This entailed conducting telephone and face-to-face interviews with a variety of stakeholders. Three key stakeholder groups participated in the study:

- Bristol City Council staff conducted, and/or facilitated the consultation process;
- community or volunteer groups, who led the consultation process on behalf of their local community.
- Local residents, who were directly or indirectly affected by the changes brought about by the Play Pathfinder programme. The consultation process, for all case study playgrounds, was conducted in two-stages in order to provide opportunities for children, young people and adults to discuss, influence and determine the final designs.

Stage 1: The purpose of this stage was to collect ideas from the participants about what they think the local play area should be like and what would make it better.

Stage 2: In this stage, participants were asked to assess the initial design proposals and provide comments to the designer and contractors.

- 11.5. Bristol City Council Play and Park Team used a range of methods to gather people's views to inform them about the design process of the playgrounds. They included: the organisation of events in local parks; the distribution of consultation questionnaires; the organisation of focus groups meetings with children in local schools; public meetings with all interested members of the community regardless of ethnicity, disability, gender and socio-economic background.

Assessment of the Consultation Process

11.6. The structure of this section follows the structure of the questions investigated: They have been formulated as follows:

Question 1.

What models of the consultation and participation methods were used in order to inform and involve all groups in the communities?

Question 2.

Has the process succeeded in addressing the issues and aspects of the impact of changes to the playground and park? If so, to what extent?

Question 3.

How effective was the process in terms of dealing with the conflicts of values and interests within the communities?

Criteria for the assessment of consultation process

The concern of this report is local evaluation area fieldwork. Consequently, the following criteria were considered pertinent to this stage of the process:

- models of consultation and engagement;
- effectiveness of community's consultation and dealing with conflict of values;
- success in developing local ownership (children, young people, parents, carers and local community).

Sampling strategy

The participants in this stage of the evaluation were families (with and without children) living within the area. We have made a random selection of 5 to 7 households per case study. In this process, we have paid particular attention to the age and gender of the participants. We also sought to involve the representatives of different ethnic groups and backgrounds. The selection ensured a mix across these strata.

Methods used for the assessment

To assess the consultation process conducted we have used the following research methods:

- a) focus group meetings with a random sample of members from the communities;
- b) interviews with people living within a 100 metre radius from the playgrounds;
- c) questionnaire survey.

All participants were given a short questionnaire to complete at the end of the focus group meetings and interviews. The average time per meeting and questionnaire was between thirty minutes and an hour. A sample of the questionnaire, the meeting and the interview schedules can be found in the Appendix 1 of this report.

Focus group meetings and interviews

The aims of focus group meetings and interviews were:

- 1) to understand the community perspective on the changes to the play spaces taking place in their neighbourhoods;
- 2) to identify early learning relating to the process of developing play sites;
- 3) to gather a feedback on the process of improvement, including process relating to the decision making, involvement of families and the local community.

All meetings were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed. In this report we have added some sections of text taken from the actual transcriptions of these meetings and interviews. Following data protection regulation, the anonymity of participants has been preserved.

Questionnaires

11.7. Questionnaire surveys were used to cross check our findings from meetings and interviews with residents. The results of the questionnaire analysis provided us with valuable information. The participants were asked to rate their responses against each of the statements respectively. Each respondent was asked to rate a set of 14 statements using five point Likert scale from 1 to 5.

- | | |
|-----|----------------------------|
| 5 | Definitely agree |
| 4 | Mostly agree |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree |
| 2 | Mostly disagree |
| 1 | Definitely disagree |
| N/A | Not applicable |

11.8. All scores were analysed statistically using SPSS software. This method has been widely used in empirical studies based on Bryman and Cramer's (2005) research, which provides details of the procedures and the kinds of output obtained when this software is used. The topics assessed through the questionnaire survey, which we have reported on here, were:

- 1) involvement in consultations;
- 2) satisfaction with the process;
- 3) satisfaction with information communication;
- 4) satisfaction with feedback;
- 5) satisfaction with the proposed changes.

The findings

11.9. The assessment of consultation process conducted for the four selected playgrounds in Bristol is reported per case study. We regard this to be the best way to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the different consultation practices across the four case study areas. In addition, we consider this to provide a better understanding about specific aspects of the consultation process for each area where the planned changes to the playgrounds would take place.

4.1 Introduction

11.10. This section of the report provides an overview of methods employed by Bristol City Council teams. The consultation process was conducted by Bristol City Council Play and Parks representatives and members of the Inclusive Play Delivery Team. The consultations with children were supported by staff trained to work with children. These included Play Rangers, trained play workers, teachers, as well as professional moderators.

11.11. Consultation meetings were organised to collect communities' responses to the proposed changes to the playgrounds. Participants in this process were primarily groups of citizens who had responded to Bristol City Council's request for participation. In addition, many community groups, such as Gores Marshalls and Barton Hill Settlements Community Group took an active role in the process. A series of consultation meetings were organised in each of the neighbourhood areas in close proximity to where playgrounds or parks are located.

11.12. Bristol City Council employed the following methods of engagement and consultations in this process:

Methods of Engagement:

- leaflets delivered door to door;
- information and design plans placed on the boards in parks;
- contact and arrangements for meetings with children at local schools;
- information in local papers;
- a team of council representatives organised and attended all meetings.

Consultations:

- questionnaire survey;
- meetings with various community groups;
- meetings organised for a wider members of communities;
- consultation events in public spaces (parks, shopping centres);
- consultation meetings in community centres.

Our reporting is based on three main sources of information:

- 1) summaries of findings from various consultation events organised by Bristol City Council team;
- 2) face to face interviews with various stakeholders, affected directly or indirectly by the consultation process;
- 3) our analysis of the consultation process based on various sources.

11.13. Our first source of information was based on reports and various papers obtained from Bristol City Council to gain an understanding and a comprehensive picture of the overall consultation process. We also conducted several face-to-face interviews with Bristol City Council staff, who were involved in the consultation process in each case study. Our second source was data we collected through a questionnaire survey, interviews and focus group meetings. This data was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative research analyses.

The following sections of this report present these findings and report them per case study.

Gores Marsh playground in Bedminster

11.14. Bristol City Council Play and Parks conducted a consultation process to explain and discuss changes they were proposing to make to the existing Gores Marsh playground. Participants in the consultation process were adults who live near Gores Marsh Park and children who attend the two primary school located near the park. These schools are Luckwell and Ashton Gate primary schools.

As shown on Table 39 some additional consultations were carried out by the Parks Friends group and Gores Marshalls. They have been working with the landscape architect, Alex Fraser, to produce designs for the development of the whole park.

Place	Participants	No. of participants	Conducted by
Luckwell Primary School	Children age 5-10	10	KH/A. Fraser, Head Teacher
Ashton Gate Primary School	Children age 9-10	8	C. Callan/B. Hall
Sainsbury's	Children and residents	40 adults 7 children	Inclusive Play Delivery Team
Luckwell Primary School	Residents	8	S. Lutkenhouse (Project manager); A. Fraser (Landscape architect)

Table 40: Consultations with adults and children undertaken for Gores Marsh play area

The Assessment

11.15. In this section, we look at the three main aspects of the consultation process which are relevant to this evaluation which have been stated previously.

The level of engagement and models of consultation employed to inform and involve all groups within the communities

Engagement

11.16. Overall, forty-eight adults and twenty-five children took part in the consultation process. Altogether eighteen children, from the two local primary schools, Ashton Gate and Luckwell, took part in the consultations. According to reports, the majority of children consulted were between five to ten years old. It is not clear how many children between eight to thirteen years were consulted. This age is the target group by the Play Pathfinder programme, The consultation with adults entailed organising an event at Sainsbury in Bedminster, a meeting with Gores Marshalls, and a series of fundraising events organised by Gores Marshalls at Bedminster.

11.17. The evidence from Bristol City summaries shows that these events were well attended and generated a large amount of information. Responses to the consultation questionnaire were considerably less successful. Only two completed questionnaires were returned to Bristol City Council Team.

11.18. The lack of completed questionnaires is by no means a reflection on community engagement. The available evidence suggests that a large number of residents were enthusiastically engaged in the events and meetings, but possibly they did not see the need for completing questionnaires to provide their feedback.

Consultations

11.19. The community representatives reported that the consultation process has had positive effects on community involvement and generated a lot of interest in the changes proposed to the Gores Marsh park and the playground. This is partly the result of the involvement of Gorse Marshalls in this process. Gores Marshalls are a pro-active community group, which organised fund raising and collected a considerable amount of money (approx. £50,000) towards the improvements of Gorse Marsh park.

11.20. The majority of households in this neighbourhood (approx. 400) have received frequent invites to meetings, opening event consultations, leaflets through the door and the events were advertised in the local magazine (The Pigeon). Some participants stated that

"People came from all over the area and at the school; they kept asking children what they think about the playground." (A middle aged couple)

11.21. When asked to explain how much they knew about the changes to the playgrounds, representatives reported that they were fully aware of the consultation process, and they knew the purpose of the consultations.

- 11.22. Children's views and opinions were collected during two sessions facilitated by Bristol City staff and supervised by teachers. The landscape architect commissioned to redesign the playground also took part in these consultations. Their responses were collated and reported on a feedback pro-forma produced by the staff from Youth and Play services at Bristol City Council.
- 11.23. The overall feedback from the consultation processes created by Bristol City Council has been divided into four brief reports. The reports are: summaries of the findings; people's comments; questions raised, and concerns expressed. Generally, the reports are not intended to be critical analyses of the findings or assessments of comments and suggestions collected. Their scope was rather to provide a record of the consultation process.

Consulting Adults

- 11.24. Consultations with adults were focused on their views of the function and design of the new playground along with the issues and concerns of people and families who do not use the playground.
- 11.25. A consultation event at Sainsbury's revolved around the presentation and discussion of the design scheme. People were invited to assess the scheme by discriminating between what they like and things they don't like about the proposed design. This event also provided an opportunity to discuss and propose ideas of what would make the play space better with a larger and more random group of people. However, from Bristol City reports it is not clear whether people who took part in the event actually live in the vicinity and use the playground. Large superstores such as Sainsbury's in Bedminster tend to attract shoppers from areas outside of Bristol. For example, people living in the North Somerset area tend to shop there.
- 11.26. The consultation meeting organised with Gores Marshalls also focused on the discussion about the proposed design scheme. The landscape architect, Alex Fraser, who designed the playground, addressed peoples' queries, provided some explanations, and discussed the pros and cons of different options. The reporting from this consultation event indicates significant concerns about the safety of the children in this park. These and other issues were reported in brief in the feedback pro-forma produced by the Bristol City Council. Our meeting with a group of community representatives confirmed that the landscape architect considered their comments, discussed possible options and met their requirements.

Consulting Children

- 11.27. Consultations with children were conducted using a pictorial questionnaire, which was designed as a compilation of photographs, icons and short sections of text. The design of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) was child-friendly, containing a series of interlinked photographs of the variety of play spaces, play equipment, and children playing. This has helped to stimulate children's' participation in the process. Their responses to the pictures, questions, and comments suggest that this was an effective way of establishing their preferences for play spaces, equipment, and interests.
- 11.28. The findings emerging from the consultations conducted in Luckwell Primary School (Stage 1) proved children's consultation was effective. Evidence shows that the process brought out children's views and the types of experiences in playgrounds they are looking for. The reports from these events also provide some understanding of aspects on which children agree or disagree.

The assessment of the consultation process in terms of the extent of success in addressing all the issues and aspects of the impact of changes to the playground/park

- 11.29. This section draws on the analysis of the evidence we collected using a questionnaire survey, a meeting with a group of community representatives and interviews with a random sample of people living in the neighbourhood.
- 11.30. Focus group meetings with the residents and representatives confirmed that most the community groups were represented in the consultation process. This group acted as a broad sample of people who live in the area, from a wide range of social backgrounds, training, experience and age. These included families with children, people whose grandchildren come to the playground, young families and people who come to the park to walk dogs.
- 11.31. During our meeting we asked people about their satisfaction with how the consultation process dealt with their interests and experiences of the park and the proposed ideas for a new playground. Approximately 90% of participants stated that consultations were effective in eliciting people's views with a strong consensus that changes needed to be made. Overwhelmingly, it was acknowledged that the park and playground improved. There was also an agreement about the potential of the proposed change to have a positive impact on the community, and the intentions to make a better use of the green space in the future. The main part of the consultation process conducted by Bristol City Council focused on the changes of play opportunities available to children and young people in the park.

The assessment of effectiveness of the process in terms of dealing with the conflicts of values and interests within the communities

- 11.32. We also examined whether, and if so how, different values, interests and potential conflict were dealt with by Bristol City, in the consultation process.
- 11.33. Generally, there is a little evidence of conflict of interest and values during the consultation process in the Gores Marsh area. More precisely, there were two issues that led to conflicting responses, namely, the removal of horse chestnut trees and the reduction of area for dog walking. Some concerns were also raised about anti-social behaviour, as the improvements are likely to attract teenagers.
- 11.34. The removal of the trees was dealt with effectively by providing a sound scientific evidence of a disease which affects these trees. When community members were presented with plans for the replacement of the old trees with new healthy trees, they responded enthusiastically because a better alternative was available.
- 11.35. The major group of participants in the consultation process who expressed concerns about the impact of the change were those walking dogs in the park. They were concerned about the reduction of green space and the enlargement of play area. We learnt that these issues have been addressed by Bristol City Council promptly and the solution was found by reducing the width of footpath from two to three metres. This change lessened the impact on the rest of green space in the park. Community representatives have confirmed the positive outcome of this issue.
- 11.36. The questionnaire survey yielded information in bulk and provided reassurances as to the reliability of the information. Despite being quite short (14 questions) a wide range of aspects of the consultation process were covered.(See Appendix 1)
- 11.37. The group meetings gave more comprehensive information. These group sessions allowed the examination of each issue by different interest groups and were explored from several different perspectives. This helped us to realise the importance of the concerns.

Effectiveness of consultation and engagement

Effectiveness of community's consultation and dealing with conflict of values

- **The consultation process on the design of play area was effective**

- 11.38. Regarding this statement, Table 40 shows that nearly 24% of respondents agreed, either strongly or fairly. However, a high proportion of participants (66.7%) were not aware of the consultation process. Gores Marsh and St. Paul's showed the highest counts of strongly agree responses (23.9% and 30.8% respectively).
- 11.39. Oldbury Court responses showed that 7.6% of participants fairly agree with this statement. As a destination park, many of the playground users come from other neighbourhoods, therefore visitors lack knowledge about the consultation process. There was a large proportion of don't know responses (83.3%). This may include visitors from other areas, new residents or local users who did not know about the consultation process.

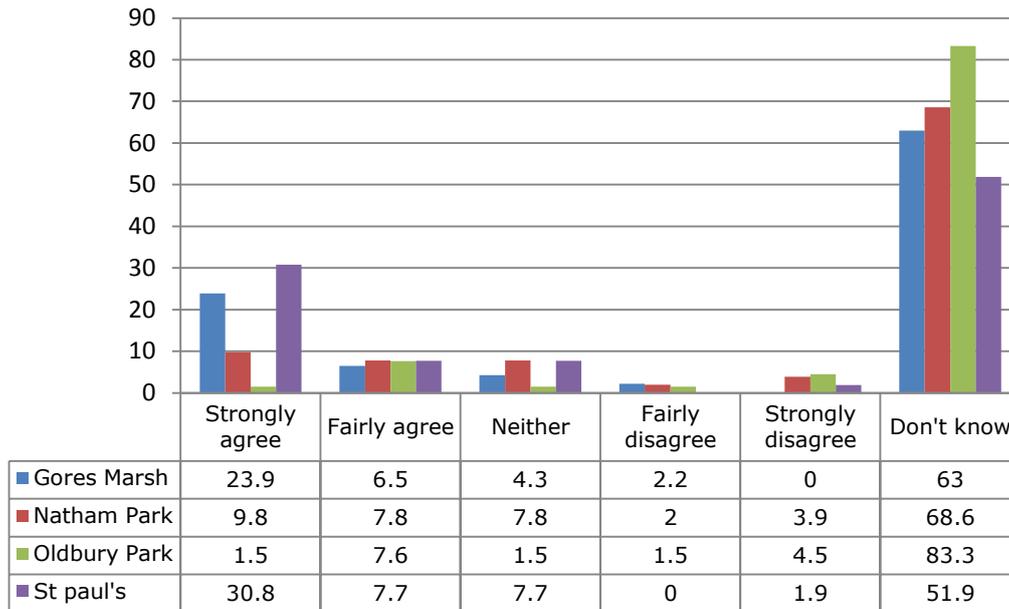


Table 41: Effectiveness of consultation process

- My comments on whether the play area meets my needs were listened to and valued

11.40. Regarding this statement, statistical analysis on table 41 highlighted that over 16% of respondents confirmed, either strongly or fairly, that their comments on whether the play areas met their needs were listened to and valued. However, 74.4% of participants could not comment. Strongly agree responses had higher counts in Natham Park and St. Paul's (7.8% and 21.2% respectively). While Oldbury Court and Natham Park counts showed a higher proportion of don't know responses, the other playgrounds showed significant scores as well. Visitors from other neighbourhoods and lack of information of the consultation process may have contributed to these high percentages.

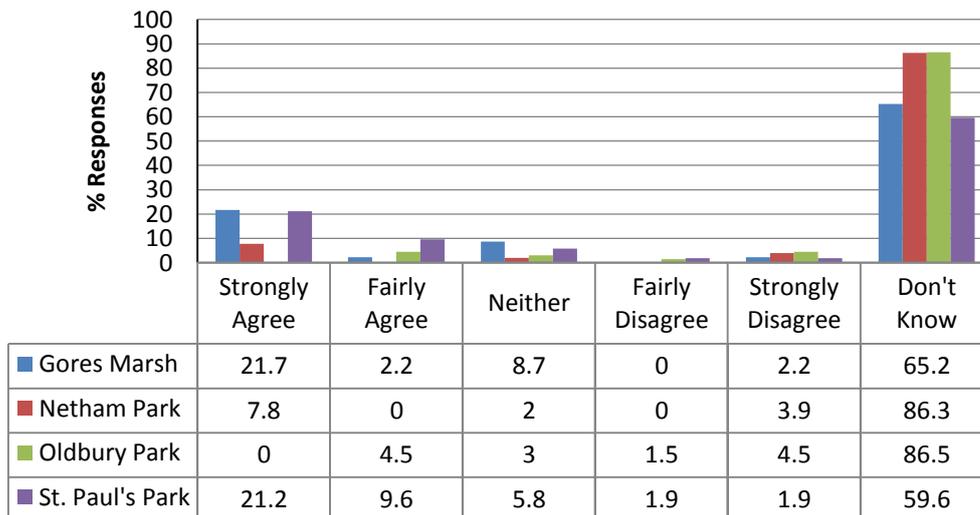


Table 42: Comments listened to and valued

- I received sufficient information about the changes to be made to the existing play area

11.41. Table 42 shows that *strongly agree* and *fairly agree* counts achieved higher percentages in St. Paul's Park (32.7% and 13.5%). As before, high percentages of *don't know* responses may be due to users coming from other areas or lack of knowledge of the consultation processes, especially in Oldbury Court where these response achieved a significant 87.9%.

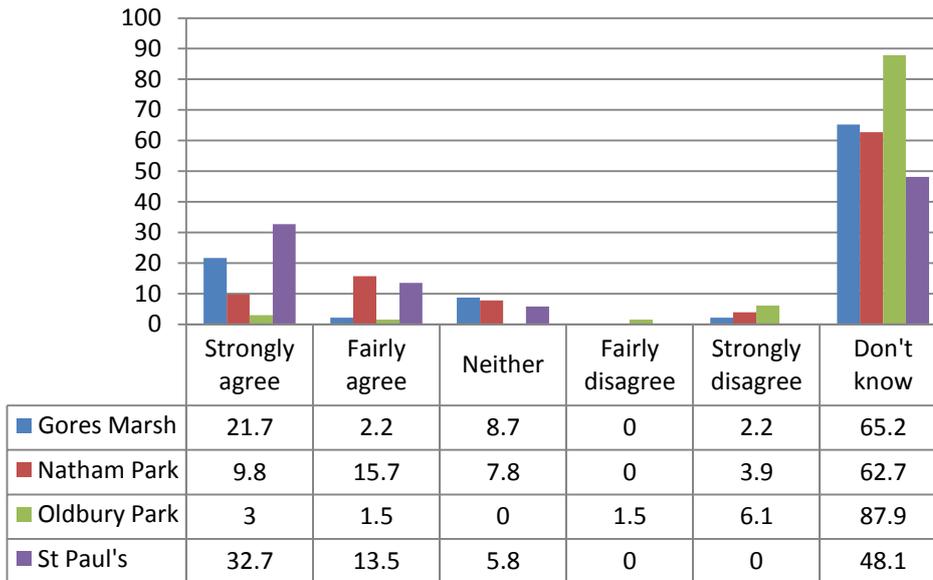


Table 43: Information received about changes to play area

- I received prompt answers to my queries and concerns about the design of the play area**

11.42. Regarding this statement, strongly agree and fairly agree counts achieved the highest percentages, 19.2% and 11.5% respectively, in St. Paul's Park (Table 43). Again, high percentages of don't know responses may be partly as a consequence of users coming from other areas or lack of knowledge of the consultation processes, especially in Oldbury Court where these response achieved 91%.

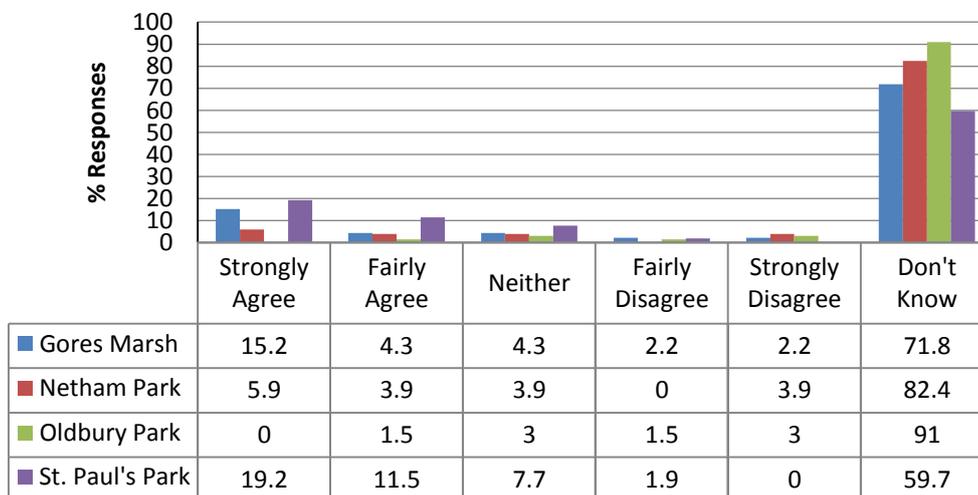


Table 44: Prompt answers for queries and concerns about design of play area

- All changes made to the design have been communicated effectively**

11.43. Descriptive statistics shown in Table 44 demonstrated that only 7.7% of respondents confirmed that their all changes made to the design have been communicated effectively. St. Paul's Park showed higher counts of strongly agree (32.7%) and fairly agree (9.6%). An average of 76.4% of participants could not comment. As in the previous statement, high percentages of don't know responses may be due to users coming from other areas or lack of knowledge of the consultation processes, especially in Oldbury Court where this response achieved 86.4%, followed closely by Gores Marsh with 84.8% and Netham Park with 82.3%.

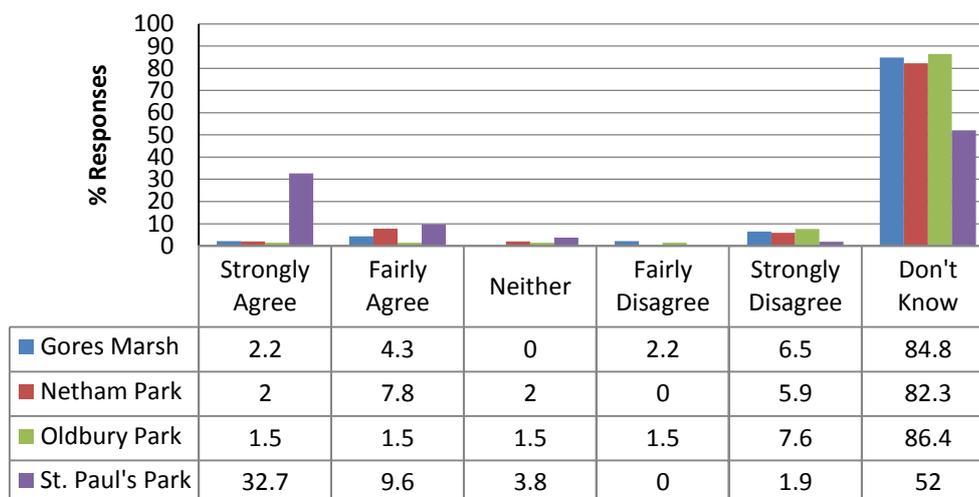


Table 45: Changes made to design effectively communicated

- Local people involvement in the process has helped to achieve improved respect for the play area

11.44. Tabulated results illustrated in Table 45 highlighted that 30% of respondents were in agreement, either strongly or fairly, that local people involvement in the process has helped to achieve improved respect for the play area. Gores Marsh higher scores of strongly agree and fairly agree responses were 41.3% and 37%, respectively. An average of 56.5% of participants could not comment. Don't know responses achieved higher percentages in Oldbury Court (88%), Netham Park (68.6%) and St. Paul's (51.9%). Again, issues like visitors coming from other areas, added to lack of information about the consultation process may have contributed to this distribution.

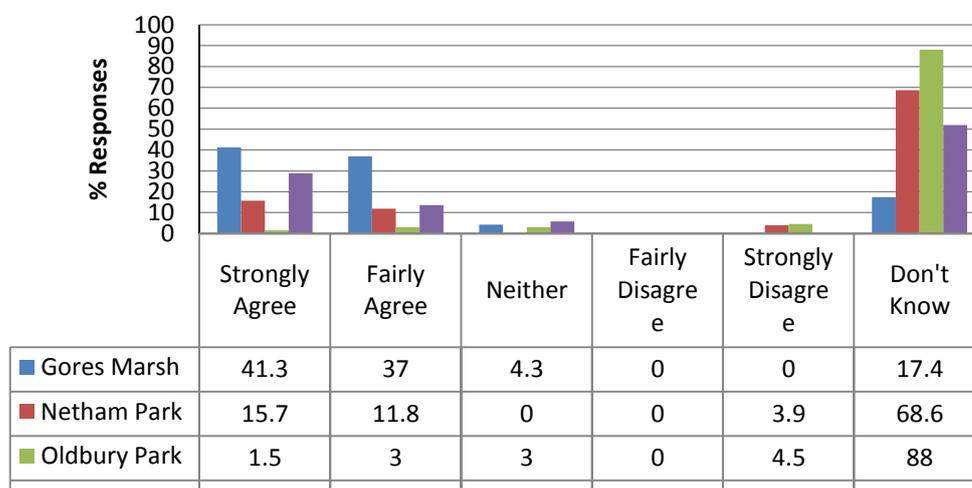


Table 46: Involvement of Local people helped achieve improved respect for play area

- As a result of the process, I feel that I have made a positive contribution to the consultation process

11.45. Descriptive statistics shown in Table 46 revealed that 19.3% of respondents agree, either strongly or fairly, that as a result of the process, they feel that I have made a positive contribution to the consultation process. St. Paul's Park strongly agree (30.8%) and fairly agree (9.6%) counts showed higher percentages than the other playgrounds. Results also highlighted that over 72% of participants responded don't know. Involvement of visitors from other areas and new residents may have contributed to high percentages of don't know responses, especially in Oldbury Court, which achieved the highest percentage of don't know responses with 87.9%.

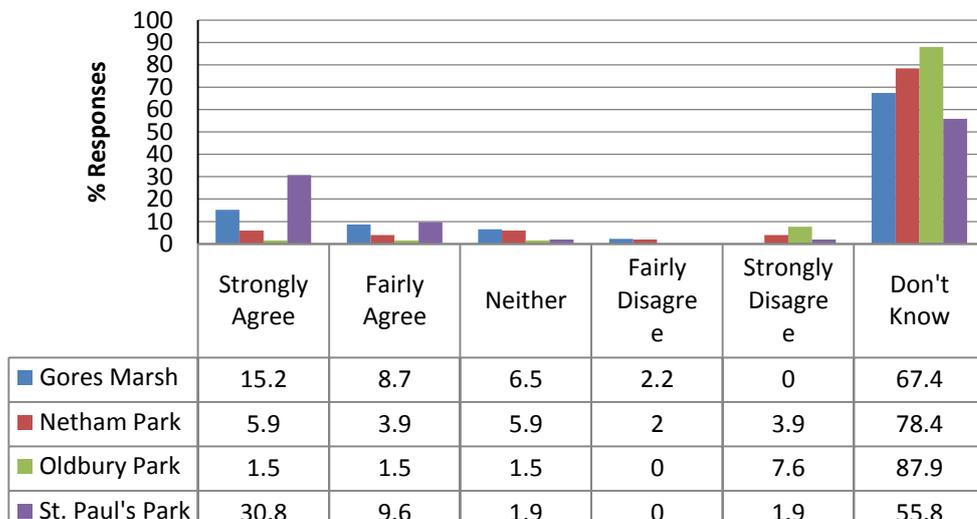


Table 47: Positive contribution to consultation process

Overall, I think that the improvements to this play area/park resulted in a positive play experience

11.46. Table 47 revealed that overall, strongly agree and fairly agree responses achieved higher counts in all playgrounds, which together represent a combined proportion of 91.1%. This indicated that participants think that the improvements to this play area resulted in a positive play experience.

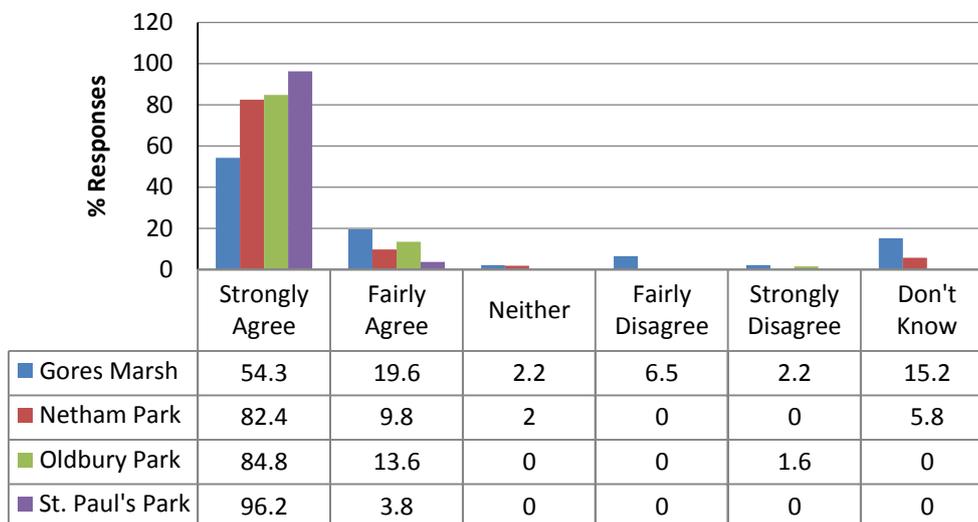


Table 48: Improvements resulted in a positive play experience

Access in developing local ownership (children, young people, parents, carers and local community)

- There is a clear feeling of ownership for the play area by children and adults

11.47. Statistical analysis of results regarding this statement are illustrated in Table 48, where it is highlighted that strongly agree (48.5%) and fairly agree (32.7%) achieved high counts and confirms that there is a clear feeling of ownership for the play area by children and adults, with a combined percentage of 81.2%.

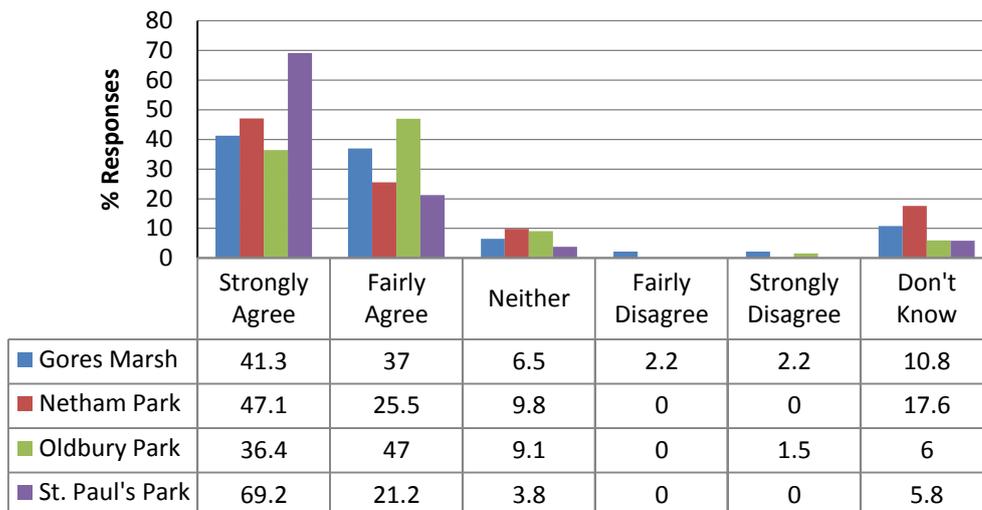


Table 49: Clear feeling of ownership for play area by children and adults

- The new play area improved the character of the local neighbourhood

11.48. Table 49 shows that over 82% of respondents were in agreement with the statement “the new play areas improved the character of the local neighbourhood”. Strongly agree and fairly agree high counts (71.3% and 19.7% respectively), indicated that participants concur that the new play area improved the character of the local neighbourhood. Don’t know responses (9.1%) may be due to issues such as visitors coming from other areas, added to lack of information about the consultation process.

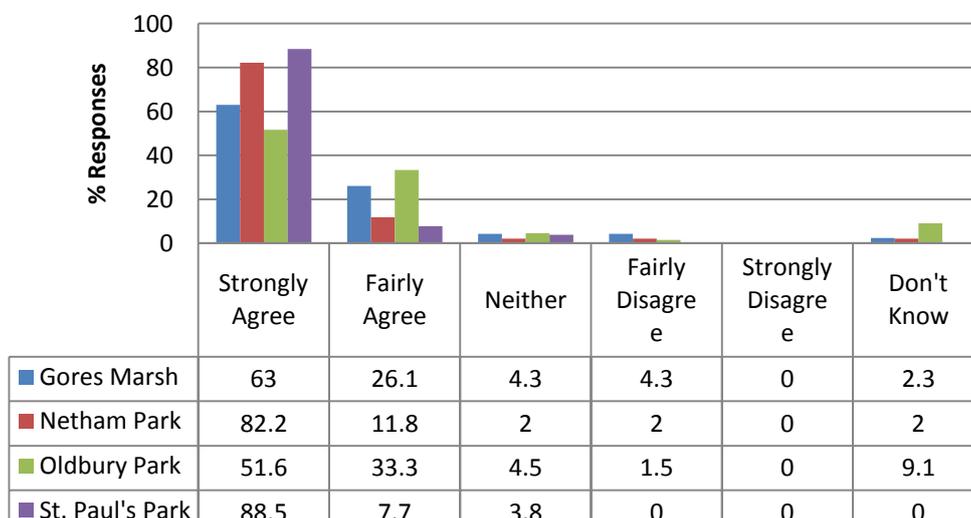


Table 50: New play area – improved character of local neighbourhood

The improvements have increased the number of children using the play area

11.49. Statistical analysis of the responses obtained regarding this statement revealed that strongly agree responses achieved higher percentages in Netham Park (78.4%) and St. Paul’s(76.9%), followed Gores Marsh (63%) and Oldbury Court (62.1%). Fairly agree counts followed with the exception of St. Paul’s, which achieved a relatively lower percentage of 7.7%. Don’t know responses, which in average represented 13.2%, may be due by issues like visitors coming from other areas, added to lack of information about the consultation process (Table 50).

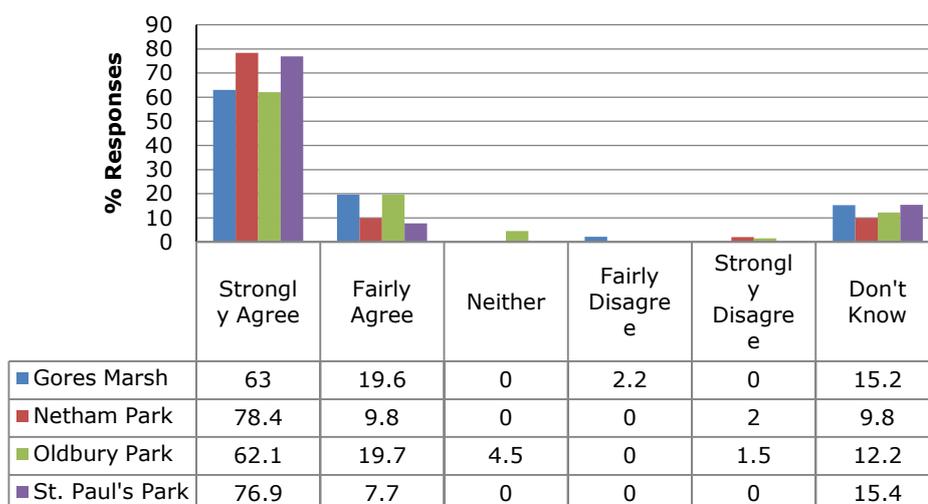


Table 51: Improvements to play area - increase in number of children using the play area

Conclusions

11.50. Overall, the consultation process of Gores Marsh was a resounding success for both Bristol City Council and the local community. The ingredients for this success were mainly due to the strong collaboration between Bristol City Council and Gores Marshalls. Both parties invested a great deal of effort to ensure that the community was kept informed and engaged in the process. The Gores Marshalls group were highly motivated and driven to ensure that this initiative succeeds. Above all, there was a clear sense of ownership of the project. They have a strong attention to detail, as they seem to know every aspect of the project and almost every resident, including their key interests/motivations and concerns. This group was very effective in keeping everyone informed using both the local newsletter and the display sign near the playground. For instance, they continuously invited feedback about the proposed designs, which were clearly displayed near the playground. These factors, combined with an excellent working relationship with Bristol City Council staff have ensured the success of the consultation process at Gores Marsh.

Oldbury Court Park: A destination playground in Fishponds

11.51. The consultation process about the changes to this city destination playground and park was conducted in two stages:

- *Stage 1:* Consultation with children and adults;
- *Stage 2:* The design feedback from the consultations with children and young people and adult design feedback.

Table 51 shows which consultations took place in each stage, where and the number of participants.

Stage	Place	participants	No. of particip.	Conducted by
Stage 1	St. Mathias and Dr Bells school	Children	24	GM, Bristol City Council
	Oldbury court community centre	Residents: Neighbourhood Partnership, Snuff Mills friends group, Councillors	18	Bristol City Council
Stage 2 Design Feedback	Oldbury Court park	Residents and Children	30	Bristol City Council
	Oldbury court after school club	Children	20	KH, Play scheme staff

	Oldbury court school	Children	10	Play scheme staff
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Table 52: Consultations with adults and children undertaken for Oldbury Court play area

The Assessment

11.52. In this section, we looked at the three main aspects of the consultation process relevant to this evaluation.

The level of engagement and models of consultation employed to inform and involve all groups of communities

Engagement

11.53. Bristol City Council summaries of the findings show:

- *an extensive involvement of children (109 children);*
- *a considerably lower involvement of adults (25) in the consultation process.*

11.54. Children involved in the process were recruited from the two primary schools located in this area, namely, St. Mathias and Dr. Bells and Oldbury Court. Between the ages of four and fourteen years, which was slightly outside of the scope of the Play Pathfinder programme that focuses primarily on eight to thirteen year old children.

11.55. Adults' participated in the consultation process by taking part in the public meeting held at the Oldbury Court Community Centre and a park event organised on the 20th June 2009 by Bristol City Council. Bristol City Council's summary findings of the meeting at the community centre reported sending out 249 invitations to near neighbours and several community groups such as Neighbourhood Partnership, Snuff Mills Friend group and councillors. Yet, only eighteen people responded to the invitations for a public meeting. The attendance of the park event was slightly better; approximately twenty-five people took part in the consultation.

11.56. Our evidence and analysis confirmed the reluctance of residents to take part in the process. One possible explanation for this, which emerged from the interviews with a small group of people, is a lack of sense of ownership of this playground. Many residents perceive this playground as a Bristol City Council owned-and-managed park rather than a community place.

Consultations

11.57. Consultations with children were conducted by Bristol City Play and Youth workers and with some assistance from teachers in schools. Children's responses were collected using the same pictorial questionnaire as for all other playgrounds in Bristol. Children were asked and engaged in discussion through the exploration of three play satisfaction indicators questions:

- 1) What I like to do?
- 2) What I think about?
- 3) What would make the playground better?

11.58. Children primarily responded to the pictures play equipment placed in the questionnaire. They were also shown photographs of playgrounds across the UK and Europe; particularly environmental play areas that adults and children may not have experienced before.

11.59. A set of similar questions was used in public consultation event organised for adults in the park (some children also took part in the event). They were:

- 1) What do I like about the playground?
- 2) What I don't like?
- 3) What would make the playground better?

11.60. In adult consultations, Bristol City Council teams used the magic carpet photographs they have used with children. Adults were able to either respond verbally or by post, on the types of play environment that they did or did not like. After the experience of year one consultations, the team was aware that adults' ideas about play space were limited by experience as much as the children's. Photos were used to help 'remind' them of their own play experiences as children and to help them to understand the concept of natural play.

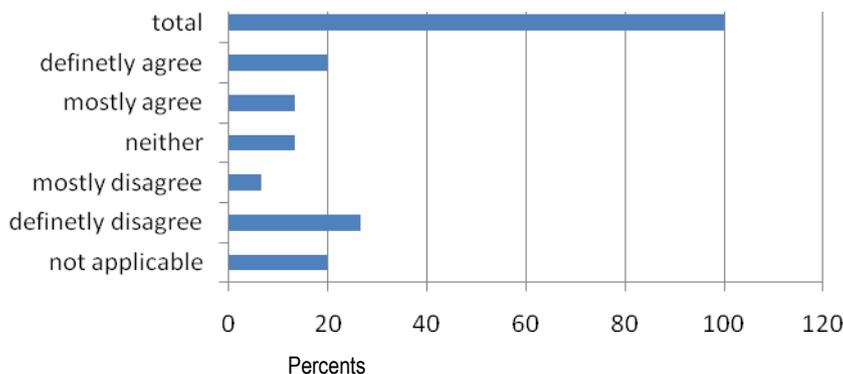
11.61. The findings from this process were reported in brief summaries for each of the consultation events. Again, as in the case of Gores Marsh report, these are not critical reflections on the process or findings. Rather they are intended to provide some indications of children's and adults' aspirations and concerns.

The assessment of the consultation process in terms of the extent of success in addressing all the issues and aspects of the impact of changes to the playground/park

Consultations with adults

11.62. We assessed the satisfaction with the consultation process using a short questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The findings below represent responses from a random sample of residents living near the Oldbury Park (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Sample of findings of consultation with adults for Oldbury Court Park



The data show:

- 33.3% of people we approached did not take part in the consultation;
- 33.3% of participants feel that they were involved in the process;

11.63. The results of our questionnaire survey show a significant difference in the level of satisfaction with the process among the population living in this area. The same division is apparent when assessing the overall process of change to the existing playground. To explore these results further we interviewed a small random selection of five families who live within a 100 meters radius from the entrance to the park. The majority of people reported a lack of information as the main reason for their not taking part in the consultation. Some people who walk dogs in the park also mentioned the lack of communication about the changes to the playground. When asked whether they had seen plans or drawings of the new playground placed on boards in the park, they could not recall seeing any, even though they visit the park daily. The evidence collected suggests two main reasons behind these findings:

- The majority of people claim that they did not receive invitations or any other information about the consultation process;
- residents who found out about the consultation accidentally did not engaged in consultations because they did not feel sufficiently well informed about the extent of changes to the playground.

11.64. In contrast, consultations with children were very productive because they involved a large number of children age between four and fourteen years old. Children’s participation was animated, produced a large amount of information and clearly identified several play themes that they were interested in. The evidence shows a shared interest among children in certain types of play. The consultation process also generated a rich source of children’s ideas and desires as to what the design of playgroun should look like, as reported by Bristol City Council consultation team.

The assessment of effectiveness of the process in terms of dealing with the conflicts of values and interests within the communities

11.65. The evidence gathered suggests an agreement within this community regarding the following three aspects of the new playground:

- A prevention of vandalism in the Playground;
- children’s safety on the playground;
- a presence of dogs in the park.

- 11.66. More precisely, the consultation process revealed how important it is for both children and adults to deal with the issue of vandalism of playground equipment. The Park event, in particular, succeeded in eliciting and identifying this shared concern.
- 11.67. Residents also expressed their concern about how the new playground will accommodate the play for children aged ten to thirteen years. There was evidence of an agreement that this community does not welcome the presence of teenagers on the playground and perceive them as a potential threat to young children. It is not clear from the summaries whether and how this specific concern was addressed at the meetings. The potential conflict between dog owners and families with children using the park emerged strongly in this consultation process. Children consulted felt threatened, by dogs, while dog owners felt deprived of the green space.
- 11.68. The second stage of the consultation sought to determine how these concerns were addressed. Based on the information available, it is not clear how these concerns were reflected on the proposed design scheme.

Conclusions

- 11.69. There is evidence to suggest that Bristol City Council has invested a great deal of time and effort to engage the local community in Oldbury Court. However, in this case, these efforts had limited success, relative to Gores Marsh. For instance, only 13.4 % of people thought that their views were taken into account in the consultation process and 53.3 % felt that the consultation process did not help to clarify what the play space would look like or how it will function. These shortcomings may be due to several reasons. First and foremost, unlike Gores Marsh, Oldbury Court did not have a strong community group which was interested in pushing forward the consultation process in partnership with Bristol City Council. Secondly, there was a lower sense of ownership in Oldbury Court. This may be due to the fact that Oldbury Court is a destination park, used by a variety of users. Thirdly, the consultation process with local residents could have been managed more effectively to ensure a better communication and engagement of resident groups.

St. Paul's/St. Paul's Adventure playground in St. Paul's

- 11.70. The following sections provide analysis and assessment of the consultation process conducted for St. Paul's/St. Paul's Adventure Playground. Table 52 shows that the consultation process for this playground has been extensive and conducted through a large number of activities. These included meetings, organised events, a visit to London play sites and presentations, which were organised and managed by Bristol City Council teams.

Place	Participants	No. of particip.	Conducted by
St. Barnabas school	Children	10	Bristol City Council
St. Paul's carnival	Children	16	Bristol City Council
Stall at St. Paul's Unlimited	Residents	18	Bristol City Council
Stall at Bristol Do Event	Children	20	Bristol City Council
St. Paul's Park survey	400 distributed surveys	39	Bristol City Council
Stakeholder meeting	A mix of local residents and workers	10	
St. Paul's Park consultation event	Special event Residents and children	16 (ch) 14 (ad)	
Stall at St. Paul's Unlimited Ask the Agencies meeting	Residents	10	
Adventure playground consultations	Children Residents	60 (ch) 50 (a)	
Presentation to St. Paul's residents group	Residents	13	Bristol City Council representative and landscape architects (David Wilson partnership)
Stall in St. Paul's centre	Residents	65	2 Landscape architects
Stall at St. Paul's Unlimited Ask the Agencies meeting	Residents	8	
Residents and children's trip to London play sites	Residents, Children, play workers	39	
Adventure playground consultation	Second stage: children and residents	No data	Bristol City Council and landscape architect

St. Paul's Unlimited Ask the Agencies meeting	Residents	8	BCC , Police Beat Officer
Stall at St. Paul's Park	Residents	49	
Presentation to St. Paul's Unlimited coordinating	Residents		Project team
St. Paul's residents meeting	Local residents	23	Project team
Stall outside Cabot school gates	Local residents	12	BCC representatives

Table 53: Consultations with adults and children undertaken for St. Paul's play area

11.71. This consultation process ran over a long period of time, nearly a year. It started in June 2008 and ended in June 2009. This required huge efforts and real commitment from Bristol City Council staff.

The Assessment

The level of engagement and models of consultation employed to inform and involve all groups of communities **Engagement**

11.72. Approximately 166 children and 217 adults took part in this consultation process. In addition to Bristol City Council, the following agencies were also involved in the process:

- St. Paul's Unlimited, community-led partnership which advocates and lobby for the community of St Pauls;
- David Wilson Partnership – Landscape architects;
- Foreground Arts – Simon Morrisey;
- Police Beat Officer.

11.73. Local residents were engaged in the consultation process through a series of events and meetings organised at St. Paul's Unlimited (which is located in St. Paul's Park), St. Paul's Adventure Playground and St. Paul's Learning and Family Centre.

Consultations

11.74. One of the major events that took place prior to the design process, was a trip to London, organised Bristol City Council staff. Play workers, a landscape architect, children, and thirty-nine local residents visited three parks and playgrounds: Battersea Park and Adventure playground; Princess Diana Memorial Playground; and Charlie Chaplin Adventure Playground. The purpose of this trip was to elicit participants' responses to good practice in playground and park design. This visit provided an opportunity for participants and the landscape architect to discuss the design, giving thought to how plans for St. Paul's/St. Paul's Park could be developed.

11.75. Another method of consultation, which was unique to this playground, was the park fun day, which was held on 31st October 2008. This event allowed local residents and children to have a chance to express their thoughts and feelings about the plans to improve the park, adventure playground and the pedestrian area (which connects the two parks). The intention was to let visitors to take part in a range of activities. Information about the event and about the proposed changes were published in the Evening Post, which is Bristol's local newspaper. The two-page article included a written explanation of the proposal and three design plans for development. The Parks Project Team invited people to visit their web site to find more information about these options and to freepost their comments or take part in the meetings at St. Pauls Unlimited Parks Sub Group.

11.76. The consultation process also involved an architectural practice, David Wilson Partnership, which produced the design of changes to the playground. Staff from this practice were available for discussion during the event, organised in St. Paul's Learning and Family Centre.

11.77. Additionally, a special meeting with St. Pauls Unlimited Coordinating Body was organised. This involved walks around the site, the playground and through Thomas Street. The intention was to present the proposals, provide clarifications and answer questions as the group walked around the site.

11.78. The consultation reports by Bristol City Council provided an extensive list of people who were involved in the consultation process. These can generally be divided into the following groups:

- The Project team which were represented by Bristol City Play and Parks, Places for People, Play Pathfinders Programme Management, Inclusive Play Delivery Team, Children and Young People Services.

- People invited to offer advice and expertise when required. These included Play Maintenance Advice, Neighbourhood Art, Ecological Advice, Urban Design Advice.

The assessment of the consultation process in terms of the extent of success in addressing all the issues and aspects of the impact of changes to the playground and park

11.79. Figure 8 shows the results of the descriptive statistic analysis of questionnaire. The results show that :

- 50% of people feel that they were not fully involved in the consultation process;
- 25% of people definitely agree with this;
- 25% of people feel that they were fully consulted about the changes to St. Paul's/St. Paul's Park.

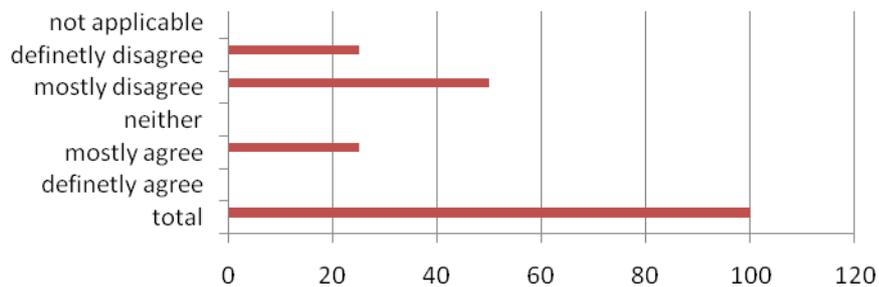


Figure 8: Results of the descriptive statistic analysis of questionnaire

- 11.80. Bristol City Council reported several concerns expressed about the proposed changes to the existing adventure playground and their effects on the St. Paul's Park and the adjacent area. It is interesting that there were very few objections to the design of the playground itself. The majority of comments focused on how the playground affects the area. These issues are listed and addressed in terms of how the consultation team dealt with them.
- 11.81. The proposed extension of the playground encroached on St. Paul's Park area. The concern about the extension was expressed at the early stage of the consultation. Some residents did not want the main park to be dominated by play and wanted to maintain the quiet and peaceful nature of the park. However, the St. Paul's Residents group view was that there are significant benefits to creating a play space in the present position of Thomas Street. For example, this design allows access to the play resources within the present adventure playground site. The proposed extension of the playground facilities was explained and justified by Bristol City Council team as necessary for the creation of a diverse, exciting, and challenging play space. Moreover, the decision was made based on residents' priorities. These were defined by the needs expressed by the families with children living in this area.
- 11.82. The extension would cause a loss of St. Paul's Park historic boundaries. This issue was raised by the Environment Task group. The design solution offered to deal with this problem was a recreation of the existing boundary wall using the traditional technique and original stones at the end of the existing road. In addition, a railing of similar type to the existing will be erected. These combined with the boundaries would reinforce the historic context of the park. St. Paul's Residents group agreed with this proposal and supported idea of moving the existing wall.
- 11.83. The implementation of design requires the removal of trees. Some members of the residents group or groups and St. Paul's Unlimited wanted to retain the maximum number of trees in the area. The main reasons behind the decision to remove the trees were the increase of visibility into the park and the creation of a wide welcoming entrance to the park. Bristol City Council representatives argued that the existing entrance to the park was particularly dark which was in accordance with the residents' concerns about the safety. This change was supported by the Arboriculture Officer, who helped to reach an agreement with the majority of members of St. Paul's Residents group and St. Paul's Unlimited about the removal of some trees in the area.
- 11.84. The loss of the Cherry Tree Avenue was also questioned by some members of the community and St. Paul's Unlimited. This proposal was the result of the original detailed design, which followed the recommendations in the Arboriculture report to remove all cherry trees in the avenue. This removal was recommended in order to create a more balanced tree cover in the area and provide an opportunity for replanting some new trees in the park. The agreement Bristol City Council team reached was a compromise with the community. Firstly, it was agreed to retain some trees. Secondly, Bristol City Council took further measures to ensure a countermeasure of the loss of some trees by additional planting and flowering trees as well as a long term maintenance of the park.

- 11.85. Design layout affects the entrance to the park and the access to the church during weddings and funerals. This concern was expressed by a small number of the Environment Task Group. During wider consultations employing detailed design layouts, this was not considered to be an issue.
- 11.86. Concerns that play facilities do not cover all ages. According to Bristol City Council evidence these concerns expressed by St. Paul's Unlimited Schools task group were not confirmed by the consultation process with all other groups and with the wider community. On the contrary, at a meeting the St. Paul's Residents group supported the range of play features. Our findings corroborate this evidence.
- 11.87. The negative effect of the widening of a diagonal path through the cherry trees. This design decision created some resistance among the residents of this area although it was made to meet Disability Discrimination Act guidelines of a minimum of 1.8 meters. During the consultation process, a compromise was agreed; since this is a key route through the park it is essential that this path is of a width that mirrors its importance and use.
- 11.88. Some concerns were raised that consultation process was not broad enough. The Reports from Bristol City Council showed the evidence of thirteen different forms of consultation conducted and the evidence of a large number of people participating in the process, which contradicts this complaint. On the contrary, our evidence showed that Bristol City Council has tried hard to make the consultation process successful and encompass all local communities. Their approach was responsive and thorough when considering all aspect of the design and its impact.
- 11.89. The meeting with a group of residents exposed a degree of dissatisfaction with the process. Some people felt that the process was not fully completed and more consultations were needed. There is strong evidence to suggest that the consultation process was extensive and sought hard to encompass all stakeholders. This process worked well up to the review of the three design alternatives of the park. Subsequently, there was a lack of communication between the design team and St. Paul's Unlimited, leading to a deterioration of the relationship between the two groups. Following our meeting with St. Paul's representatives, there seems to be a lack of understanding of the implications of the latest design decisions for the park.

The assessment of effectiveness of the process in terms of dealing with the conflicts of values and interests within the communities

- 11.90. We found that the consultation process conducted by Bristol City Council for St. Paul's/St. Paul's Playground utilised a variety of methods and techniques available for design consultations. As such, the process reached, informed and engaged a large section of various social groups in the population of this area. This is evident in the summaries of consultation events listing similar concerns and issues raised at different times. Our findings from the focus group meeting held at St. Paul's Unlimited confirmed this evidence. There is also evidence of residents' conflicting priorities, which were difficult to address. For example, the primary concern of the elderly residents living in the vicinity of St. Paul's Park is the potential change of the character of the park. In contrast, young mothers from the St. Paul's area were mainly interested in children's safety and supervision of their play. Whilst the consultation process itself could not alter these specific concerns, by addressing them it has found a compromise which is the preservation of the Victorian wall on the edge of the park and a reduction of planting around the Entrance, which will open up the place and enhance its visibility.
- 11.91. A large team of professionals from different backgrounds and expertise took part in the consultations. This was a key to the success of this process. The use of various consultation methods was also vital to the efficacy of the process. The methods were selected based on their suitability and efficiency in eliciting information from a diverse range of participants. The process itself was open, transparent and involved a high number of residents and interested community groups.
- 11.92. Children involved in the process came from various age groups. They were consulted using focus group meetings, modelling and drawings. Their aspirations for the play space were gathered and discussed within similar age groups. Children's comments were sought on both changes to the adventure playground and to the park. This was an important aspect of the process because it added the children's perspective on the changes to the park since some of them walk through the park on their way to school.
- 11.93. The analysis of children's comments suggests that there may be the following three distinct benefits of the consultation process following the London playgrounds visit:
- an understanding of possible play options stemming from the novelty of doing something new in the playground;
 - a diverse experience of play due to the use of more original equipment, which is exciting to children who are therefore more likely to be engaged in play activities when this type of play equipment is available;
 - children can be more motivated to play due to the perception that the play can take different forms, which might be better than the existing ways of play.

Conclusions

11.94. Our assessment shows that after conducting an extensive consultation process Bristol City Council has gained solid, first-hand knowledge about the benefits and limitations of the proposed changes to the playground and the design itself for children and the community. Bristol City Council has conducted one of the most comprehensive consultations, where a great deal of effort and resources were devoted to this initiative. The initial stage of the consultations was extremely successful and kept communities from St. Paul's and St Agnes strongly engaged in the process.

4.5 Netham Park Adventure Playground in Barton Hill

11.95. The consultation process for the changes to the existing Netham Park started in August 2009 and lasted three months. The consultation team comprised officers representing Bristol City Council Play and Parks and the Barton Hill Settlement's Play Rangers.

The level of engagement and models of consultation employed to inform and involve all groups of communities

Engagement

11.96. Three main methods used to consult children and adults were:

- A bespoke questionnaire;
- on-line poll on the Forum section of Community at Heart's web site;
- consultation meetings with children and adults.

Stage	Place	participants	No. of particip.	Conducted by
Stage 1 <i>Questionnaire</i>	The Community at Heart area (Barton Hill)	150 distributed questionnaires	98	Bristol City Council Play and Parks
Stage 2	Barton Hill Primary	Children	36	KH, Rob House (Play ranger) Lunch time supervisors
	Play space group	Children	5	Rob House (Play ranger)
	Netham Park	Residents	9	KH, Rob House

Table 54: Consultations with adults and children undertaken for Netham Park play area

11.97. The first stage of the consultation process was conducted using the questionnaire survey. Bristol City Council reported a high level of response to the survey. By September 2010 they received altogether ninety-eight responses (fifty three from boys and forty-five from girls aged between four and eighteen). Based on this report, it is not clear how many of children were age between eight and thirteen. However, the average age of children reported was nine years, which is within the age range of the Play Pathfinder programme. The evidence shows that the sample of respondents has accurately represented ethnic minorities living in this community. The results of the Internet based poll showed that the majority of participants (thirty-eight out of ninety-one) opted for the investment in Netham Park. We have learnt that this was one of the main factors which influenced Bristol City Council's decision to improve the play area at Netham instead of Urban Park. Children recruited to participate in the consultations, were aged between eight and fourteen and came from Barton Hill Primary School and the Play Space group. Altogether forty-one children took part in the consultations.

11.98. Residents' involvement was encouraged by publicising the proposed changes to Netham Park in an article in the evening Standard and by inviting to discuss and give feedback on the design plans put up in all the community halls. Members of Mother and Toddler group also took part in the consultations.

Consultations

11.99. Consultations with children were organised and led primarily by the Play Rangers and workers from the Settlements Community Team. They worked with the children and young people in parks and open spaces across the Barton Hill area, including Netham Park. In addition, Bristol City Council Play Officers and Play Space group helped to organise and run the consultations.

11.100. Children were consulted by collecting their response to the same pictorial questionnaire, which was used in consultations conducted at Oldbury Court Park. This is because the questionnaire used facilitated good discussion with the children, enabled them to identify and discriminate between things they want to see and stimulated them

to explain the reasons behind their preferences. These consultations were guided using the same set of three questions:

- 1) What I like to do?
- 2) What I think about...?
- 3) What would make the playground better?

11.103 This helped to involve children in discussions, generate clear understanding about their views on play and play spaces. Consultations with residents also followed the form and style of the Oldbury Court Park sessions. Three questions utilised in consultations were:

- 4) What do I like about the playground?
- 5) What I don't like?
- 6) What would make the playground better?

11.101. The findings from this process were reported in a form of short summaries rather than analysis. Only the reporting from the questionnaire survey contains a brief description of the main findings.

The assessment of the consultation process in terms of the extent of success in addressing all the issues and aspects of the impact of changes to the playground/park

The results of residents' assessment of satisfaction with the consultation process are illustrated in Table 54.

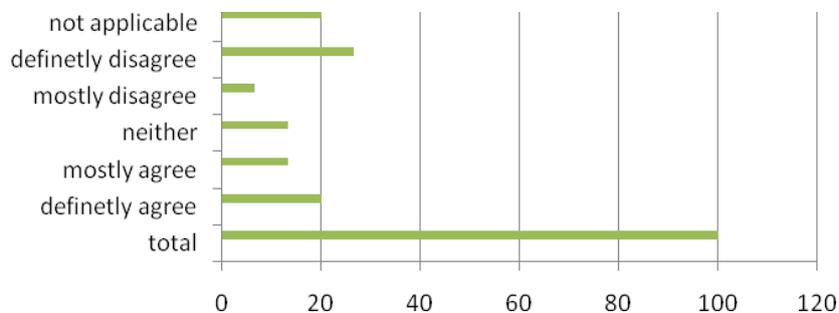


Table 55: Results of residents' assessment of satisfaction with the consultation process

11.102. The bespoke questionnaire survey targeted 150 children and young people living across the local neighbourhoods. The overall rate of responses was 65.3%.

11.103. Our survey, conducted with local residents showed, as in the previous case studies, that a large percentage (33.4%) of local residents did not take part in the consultation. However, an equally large percentage (33.3%) of people were interested and involved in the process.

11.104. The main focus of the consultation process in Netham Park was on consultations with children. These were conducted in schools using the pictorial questionnaire, which has proved to be very helpful for discussing the variety of play opportunities. In this form, the questionnaire helped children to discriminate between various choices of play, which in turn, provided facilitators with a clear understanding of their preferences. These sessions were facilitated by the staff from Community at Heart

The assessment of the effectiveness of the process in terms of dealing with the conflicts of values and interests within the communities

11.105. Based on the data we have collected and analysed, it is difficult to assess whether there were any areas of conflict within the community about the Netham Park changes and if so, what the objections were. This is probably because there was a general agreement among the residents and children who live in the area that the existing Netham Park does not offer much choice as a play area. Since the park is mainly used for the sport events, the majority of children from the area tend to use other adjacent playgrounds.

11.106. In terms of the effectiveness of the Process, it is evident that residents' participation in the consultation process was considerably less enthusiastic than the children's. Only nine people were involved in the consultations. The explanation we consider as plausible is that the residents was reluctant to participate because over the period of last ten years numerous consultations were conducted in the Barton Hill area. This is an area of Bristol City, which received several major funding grants from various Government agencies. The consultations with the community preceded the implementation of all the funding schemes. Our research showed that one of the main reasons behind the low number in this consultation process was the community's fatigue with consultations and participation in various events.

- 11.107. Another reason identified by a small group of residents living on the edge of the Park was a lack of communication. Many people did not receive invitations to participate in the consultation process. Some argued that letters should have been sent to each household.
- 11.108. The same group of residents was also concerned about a potential reduction of the space they have to walk dogs. It is not clear from the reports on the consultations with adults whether these issues were addressed during public meetings or not.
- 11.109. With regard to a new children's play area, a significant finding was that some residents felt that the children's play in the lower part of the Netham Park, which is surrounded by woodland, is not safe and needs to be supervised at all times. These comments potentially have an implication on the proposed design layout of the new park. While the evidence shows that landscape designers, Bristol City Council and the Netham Park managers considered this issue very important, it is not clear how the residents' group responded to the clarification of this aspect of design.

Conclusions

- 11.110. The issue of residents' responses to the questionnaire survey requires some clarification. The research literature suggests that most questionnaire surveys attract a certain amount of non-response. Thus, it was likely that only some of local residents would agree to participate in the survey. According Bryman and Bell (2007) the usual and widely accepted rate of non-response may be a 20% which is considerably lower than in this consultation process.
- 11.111. The issue of non-response and in particular refusal to participate in surveys is of particular significance. A considerable number of researchers suggest that response rate to surveys are declining in many countries. This implies that there is a growing tendency toward people refusing to participate in survey research. Some authors suggest that it is difficult to disentangle general trends in response rates from such variables as the subject matter of the survey, the types of responses, and the level of effort expended on improving the number of respondents to individual surveys. Our evidence shows that this was recognised by Bristol City Council teams. Thus, they responded efficiently and employed other strategies that can improve responses to survey, instruments such as meetings and interviews with adults and children, were employed in the process.
- 11.112. The two-stage process was an appropriate structure to use in the consultations. The first stage conducted at the initial stage of design decision-making process sought to determine children's and residents' views about the changes to the playground. At this stage, the process did not always involve meetings with the residents, mainly because data collection was conducted through the questionnaire survey. People living in the area were involved in the participation in order to obtain more profound information and engage a range of stakeholders, especially those affected by the implementation of the changes.
- 11.113. The second stage, has offered to people possible design solutions to be analysed and discussed. This was an opportunity for adults and children to generate ideas, deepen debate and come up with some design solutions. Probably this was significantly a more informative process than at the first stage. This stage provided a better and more explicit understanding of participants' preferences and choices.
- 11.114. Many of the methods of consultation were used to elicit and gather the views of both adults and children on the proposed changes to the playgrounds. These methods have been combined and adapted further for consultation with children. Particularly successful was the pictorial questionnaire (Appendix 1), which generated abundance of the information about what children want, what they dislike and what would improve their playground. This is an innovative method, which aims to access different aspect of children's experiences and allows their views to be expressed in a range of forms. The main benefit is that it enables children to clearly express their preferences for the type of play and play equipment they are interested in.
- 11.115. Another example of the successful engagement of children and residents was the visit to a selection of playgrounds in London. This visit has offered participants an experience of the different forms and designs of the playgrounds and play that takes place there.
- 11.116. It is difficult to draw general conclusions from the assessment of the consultation process conducted by Bristol City Council Play and Parks team. This is because of the diversity of the case studies and the communities where the playgrounds are located. Similarly, the scale of the proposed changes, and therefore their impact on the place and community vary between playgrounds making general conclusions even more difficult.
- 11.117. There is also some evidence of different community attitudes towards the playgrounds. Some communities, for example Gores Marsh, have appropriated the park and playground and felt a strong ownership of the place. Whereas other communities, such as Oldbury Park neighbourhood, consider the playground, which is one of the major destination parks in the city, the responsibility of the City authorities rather than their own. Only families with young children have an interest in this playground. The main concern of the Oldbury Court residents is their safety because teenagers use the playground in the early evening hours and groups of students often come later in the night. These findings suggest a need to focus on how to best represent the changes and information provision at a very early stage of the consultation process in order to create awareness and increase the understanding of the process.



Children's perception and outdoor play

12.1. This section of the report provides a record of the collected evidence and analyses. In addition it discusses the issues that have been identified by the evaluation process and, as such provides considerable insight into the matters that are likely to affect children's play and use of playgrounds in the city of Bristol. The research findings are reported as results of the case based analysis of four playgrounds located in:

- Gores Marsh in Bedminster
- Netham Park in Barton Hill
- Oldbury Court Park in Fishponds
- St. Paul's/St. Paul's Park in St. Paul's

Research Approach and Methods

12.2. The impact and success of the playground developments were assessed through a comprehensive research process and an empirical analysis. Three main research methods used were:

- surveys of children and their families views before the changes were made to the playgrounds;
- opinion surveys of a sample of residents in the local community—to identify the impact of the Fair Play Pathfinder project in terms of consultation process, preferences, safety and risk and other associated issues;
- consultations with children and observations of play –these methods were employed as objective techniques for assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of the play areas.

12.3. However, children friendly data collection methods were used to collect information from children. Table 55 shows which methods were used for different population groups.

Participants	Data collection methods			
Children (age 8 to 13)	Pictorial questionnaires	Cognitive mapping	Interviews	Observations
Adults	Opinion Questionnaires	Focus group meetings <i>with community representatives</i>	Interviews with residents	

Table 56: Data Collection Methods

Communities and Families Survey

12.4. A questionnaire survey evaluation was conducted over the period of six months, it started in February, when the first playground was completed, and finished in August 2010. On average more than fifty people took part for each case study. The data collected was analysed using SPSS software package specifically designed for the statistical analyses of data collected using questionnaires.

12.5. The survey is used to gather the views of a sample of people to act as an indication of the views of the whole target population. Respondents' answers were gathered using questionnaires. Statistical method of analysis (SPSS) was then used to analyse the answers. The main advantages of using this method were:

- participants were given time to think about their response;
- a large number of people has been reached;

- the survey provided an insight into the opinions and views of the whole community.

Children's perception of the Play Pathfinder improvements

12.6. Consultations with children were organised and run in school settings. Only in the Netham Park have Play Rangers helped to organise a small group of children consultations. Project team visits to schools lasted between thirty to forty-five minutes and involved classes of children Year 5 or 6 with approx thirty children per class. The children's ages were mainly nine to eleven years old. While some children were engaged in interviews, on the playground were children of varied age, starting from 7 to 13 years old. All schools selected for the consultations were located in close proximity to playgrounds.

Table 56 shows the consultations and evaluations carried out in the schools included in the consultation process.

School	Date	Children (no.)	Playground
Luckwell Primary	March 2010	28	Gores Marsh
Ashton Gate Primary	March 2010	24	
Oldbury court Primary	June 2010	30	Oldbury Court Park
St. Mathias and Dr. Bell Primary	June 2010	28	
Cabot Primary school	July 2010		St. Paul's/St. Paul's Park
Netham Park: Play Rangers	June 2010	11	Netham Park

Table 57: Consultations and Evaluations

12.7. Consultations and evaluations were conducted using a combination of three research methods:

- pictorial questionnaires;
- cognitive mapping method;
- observations.

12.8. **The pictorial questionnaire** was created and deemed as the most suitable and child-friendly format. Recent research suggests that simplicity is the key to designing good questionnaires for children (Bell, 2007). The questionnaires were created for each playground using a series of photographs of the play spaces. Children were asked to respond by ticking one of three boxes with the text: **I like it, I don't like it, It is scary**. Children were also asked to add their comments and explain why they liked or did not like these play spaces. (See Appendix 1 for a sample of questionnaire).

12.9. **Cognitive mapping:** Cognitive mapping is a construct, which encompasses those cognitive processes which enable people to acquire, code, store, recall and manipulate information about the nature of their spatial environment. This information refers to the attributes and relative locations of people and objects in the environments, and is an essential component in the adaptive process of spatial decision-making (Downs and Stea, 2005). This method has been used to gather children's perceptions of the playgrounds, differences between equipment based and landscape designed play spaces as well as their perceptions of the dangers and barriers of the playground.

12.10. For each playground, cognitive maps were created using an aerial photograph of the playground area with a simplified version of the design layout. A series of photographs taken of the play spaces were then added into the questionnaires. This enabled children to identify and evaluate places on the playground. A cognitive mapping exercise was conducted using an aerial photograph of playgrounds and sets of green, red, yellow dots:

- red dots were for the places children feel scared off;
- yellow dots for the places they do not like;
- green to mark the places they like;
- big green dots children were ask to add to the places they chosen as their favourites.

12.11. Play spaces were marked with numbers and the number of dots per place counted in order to establish the differences. (See Appendix 1 for a sample of cognitive map).

Observations:

- 12.12. There were two types of detailed observations of the playgrounds. One consisted of a series of observations at a set time interval of one to five minutes, in which the number of children on the playground and what they were doing was recorded. The other types of observations were concerned with individual children. For this, the observer selected the child and recorded his/hers activities until he/she left the playground. The observers kept a written record of these observations. Observations of play were made during daylight hours in the morning, mainly between 11.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. and in afternoon, between 4.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. The observers walked around the playground, recording each child's behaviour, age and gender. The focus was on the basic mode of a play activity, any key activities (such as imaginative play, active game etc.) and their location (type of play equipment, shared surface, grassed area etc.). The full details of the coding system used are given in Appendix 1. This way of recording enabled the assessment of which places were most popular with the children (as measured by the questionnaires and cognitive mapping) and why others were not. Observations helped us to identify types, length, and the nature of play on each playground.
- 12.13. We have observed all playgrounds selected as the case studies for the evaluation of the Play Pathfinder Project in Bristol. They represented different types of provision currently found on playgrounds, but at the same time these playgrounds contained some common items of equipment. A study was also made of a playground where play rangers team organises and supports the children's play. The result from these observations are included and discussed in this report. (See Appendix 1 for a sample of observation record).

Interviews with children:

- 12.14. During consultations and observations we also conducted open-ended interviews with a small number of children from each area. These interviews were used to draw out qualitative information on:
- why the majority of children use certain play spaces on the playgrounds;
 - met/unmet expectations;
 - the constraints on children's play.
- 12.15. This method enabled us to differentiate between 'exciting' places which, though important, may also have been used sporadically, and 'less exciting' places which may have been used for longer periods. This methodology, however, did not enable us to investigate the issue of children's play outdoors in any depth, although the interviews generated some qualitative data on it. It should be remembered that this study was about how the newly designed and equipped playgrounds facilitate children's play. Hence, we have not looked at the other organised activities which contribute the children's play outdoors.

The use of playgrounds

- 12.16. During the school year 2009/10, all playgrounds were completed and an evaluation was conducted. The last playground to be completed in June 2010 was St. Paul's. The issue of playability was investigated in terms of the following criteria:
- a) promotion of variety of play activities;
 - b) encouragement of play activities for various age groups;
 - c) supporting healthy lifestyles (physical activities);
 - d) promotion of social interactions;
 - e) sustaining play (frequency).
- 12.17. Records of the children's attendance were collected through a series of observations on the selected playgrounds throughout the week. They were obtained by interval sampling during a week and showed that there was a fairly typical profile of the use of playgrounds. However, since these observations were conducted during the spring and summer months, the picture might be different during autumn and winter months. Even in sunny spring weekends, few children appeared before 11 a.m. Attendance would increase for a period of one to two hours in the middle of the day and fell off sharply around 4.30 p.m.
- 12.18. As the measure of the popularity of various items of play equipment and play areas we have used relative usage by children. Yet, we recognise that the time spent on a series of activities is not necessarily a measure of the enjoyment which each affords. Nevertheless we adopted it as it provides an objective means of comparing one item with another. For this reason, data from each playground has been considered separately in first instance.

Gores Marsh playground

- 12.19. This section of the report presents and discusses the findings from the assessment of the improved Gores Marsh playground. This playground is located in Gores Marsh Park in the Bedminster area of Bristol, is surrounded on

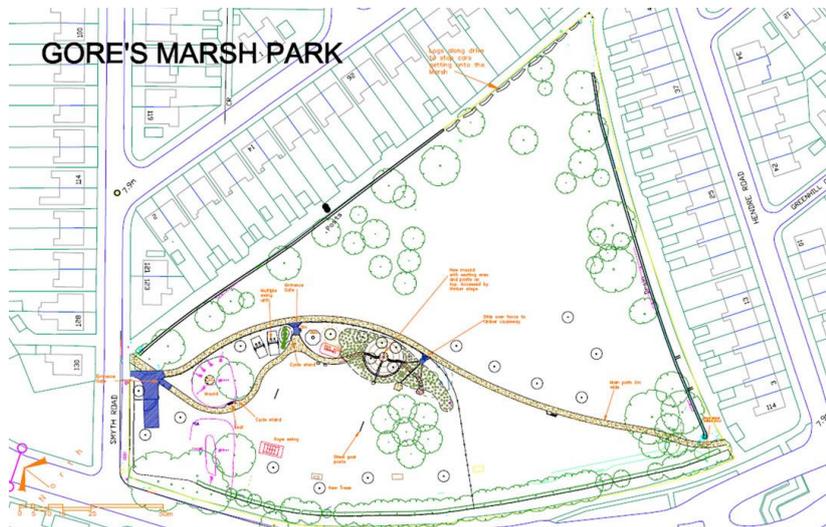
three sides by housing as can be seen on Figure 9. The play areas are accessible from park entrances on Smyth Road and Winterstoke Road. A footpath provides access through the play area.



Figure 9: Gores Marsh Park before the improvement of a playground. Park boundary is marked with yellow line

- 12.20. Gores Marsh Park was chosen as a site for investment under the Government funded Play Pathfinder investment programme through an assessment process, which involved a review of location, appropriate size, visibility, recent investment (or lack of), relationship to other regeneration programmes, child density and expected relationship within the emerging Area Green Space Plans for the Parks and Green Space Strategy.
- 12.21. Consultations with children about the new playground were carried out within the two primary schools, Luckwell Primary and Ashton Gate Primary, which are both in close proximity to the Gores Marsh playground. These schools were chosen as they have well-defined neighbourhood base catchment areas and because children from these schools were previously consulted by Bristol City Council on their views how the new playground should look like and what types of play spaces they would like within the playground. Altogether fifty-two children with ages ranging from nine to twelve years took part in consultations.

Figure 10: The new layout of playground as designed by Alex Fraser Architects



Attendance on the playground

- 12.22. Our observations of this playground show that children come to play here in large numbers mainly on the weekends. On some of these days we observed around twenty-six children of various age playing for most of the afternoon. Very often children age between eight and ten would come to the playground with parents. Older children, (aged twelve and thirteen) visited the park on their own or came in groups. These groups of children sometimes spend an hour or so on the playground.

12.23. During the school term, children play on this playground only in the afternoon. They either come immediately after school finishes, which is about 3.30 p.m. or later, after 5.00 p.m. Either way, weather permitting, they stay on the playground, on average, for no longer than one hour. The maximum number of children observed on work days was twenty-one. Only older children, age thirteen plus, come to the playground around 6.00 p.m. or later. They come on their own or in groups of two to three and leave after approximately fifteen to twenty minutes.

Places to play

12.24. The evidence collected suggests that the design of Gores Marsh playground supports a wide range of play opportunities. This is because the playground offers not only play spaces with the standard commercial play equipment but also landscape designed play spaces using natural materials and a multipurpose open space for games, such as rounders and football. Table 57 also shows how children rated different play spaces of the Gores Marsh playground through the questionnaire survey.

Playspaces	Like it	Don't like it	Scary	Children no.	Like it %	Don't like it %	Scary %
swings	45	6	2	53	85	11	4
wooden trunks	36	10	5	50	36	36	36
stones	15	15	1	50	68	30	2
climbing frame	35	14	3	52	67	27	6
trunks on the hill	35	15	2	52	67	29	4
cup	41	10	2	53	79	19	4
sae saw	44	10	2	56	79	18	4
large swing	50	1	1	52	96	2	2
ff_truks-small hill	28	23	0	51	55	45	0
ff_trunks	29	24	0	53	55	45	0
ff_hill	39	12	0	51	76	24	0
ff_grass	40	11	0	51	78	24	0
ff_grass & bench	45	8	0	53	85	15	0
ff_grass_football	40	8	0	48	83	17	0

Table 58: The summary of evidence collected through the pictorial questionnaires

Overall, the results of analysis show that:

- 1) the majority of children prefer to play on the play equipment, a large swing, small swings and a see-saw;
- 2) the favourite piece of play equipment is a large swing;
- 3) children also like some landscaped play areas;
- 4) children also like grass areas, with goal posts nearly as much as places with play equipment;
- 5) the hill with wooden steps and large stones was the least liked place on the playground.

12.25. It is important to note the differences between the results of children's evaluation of play spaces are minimal. Results of the pictorial questionnaire analysis (Table 58) show how children perceive the different play spaces. This evidence clearly confirms that one of the favourite play spaces on the Gores Marsh playground is the large swing. The place they like the least is a small hill with wooden logs on the top.

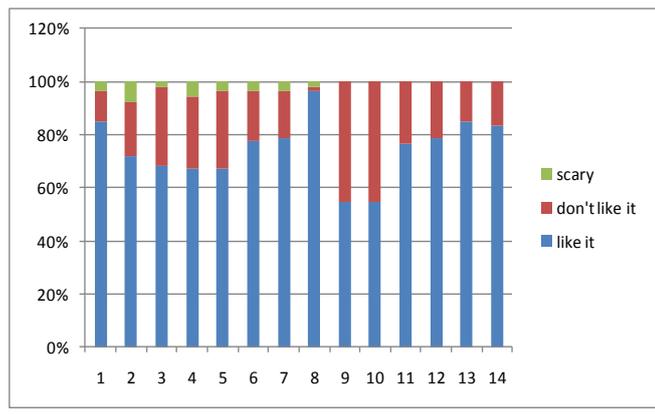


Table 59: Results of the analysis show that children generally like the design of the new playground.

12.26. The evidence shown in Table 59 suggests a significant difference between how children perceive the play spaces. For example, children’s favourite places to play are a large swing, standard swings group and a see-saw. This result demonstrates a preference for the play equipment traditionally used in design playgrounds.

Figure 11: Below are photographs of the places which proved to be the most popular on the Gores Marsh playground



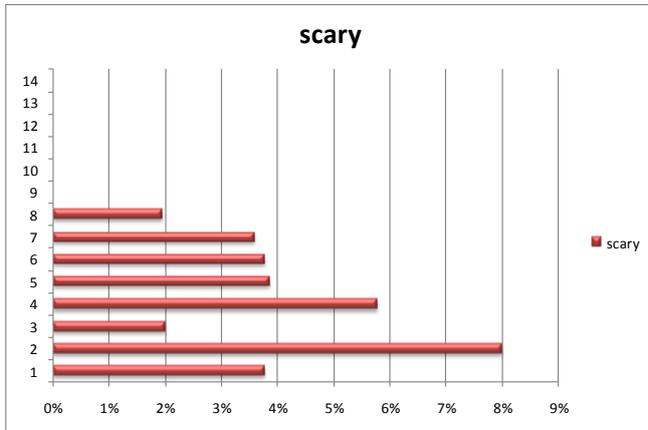
12.27. The comparison between children’s preference suggests that the landscaped spaces for free play are less favoured than places with equipment. At the same time, the evidence shows that an emergent approval of more contemporary, landscape designed play areas, for example a hill with steps and wooden logs, which is enjoyed by 55% of children. Children’s comments added to the pictorial questionnaires revealed that some children consider these places as ‘boring’ and only if they have company and play as teams or small groups, do they enjoy this type of play. It can be speculated that this is partly a result of the lack of spatial experience of natural landscapes due to their age.

12.28. The third type of play spaces on this playground are areas for free-play such as grass area with a couple of small goal posts and a bench. Children very much enjoy playing football there (83%) and find a grassed hill area and benches very attractive places for play (85%).

Table 60: The analysis shows how children perceive places on the playground (%)

Pref.	Play spaces with equipment								Play spaces for a free play					
	swings	wooden trunks	stones	climbing frame	trunks on the hill	cup	sae saw	climbing frame	small hill	trunks	grass- hill	grass	grass and bench	grass football
Like it	85	72	68	67	67	77	79	96	55	55	76	78	85	83
Don't like it	11	20	30	27	29	19	18	2	45	45	24	22	15	17

Scary	4	8	2	6	4	4	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
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12.29. One of the most significant findings is that children do not find landscape designed play spaces such as grass area with two small goal posts or a hill, scary.

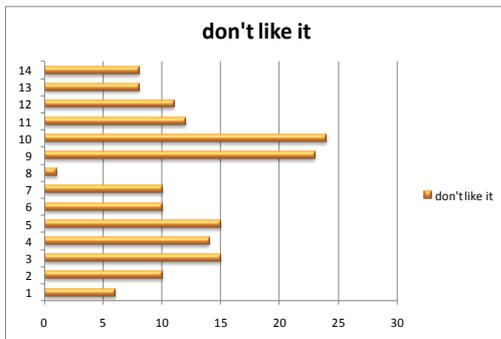
12.30. In contrast, the place that children are the most scared of (yet, only 8%) was the see saw as shown on Table 60. When asked to explain their fear, they stated that it goes really high and if the other person suddenly gets up they get bumped on the ground. Although this is an issue, which has more to do with the play behaviour rather than with the play equipment, it is the reason why a small percentage of children is not happy to play on the see saw at all.

Table 61: Results of analysis of places children find scary

Use of equipment

12.31. An interesting finding is that one of the most liked spaces to play on the Gorse Marsh playground is a large swing located nearby in the middle of the playground. This piece of play equipment is mainly used by groups of children because *“it is fun to use with friends”*. Several reasons motivate children to play there. First, the swing is *‘cool’* and *‘really fun.’* Second, children enjoy social interactions which can take place there. Swings offer to children a place for spontaneous conversation, meeting other children *“I like it because I can chat to my friends”* and *“we can have swinging competitions.”*

Figure 12: The results of analysis of place children don't like: a brightly coloured large swing was regarded as the best place to play



12.32. Generally, children move from one piece of equipment to another fairly frequently. These changes are more evident if children play on their own. If they come with a friend or in small groups of three to four, they tend to stay longer and play together on either small swings, occupying them all, or a large swing.

Use of landscaped play areas

12.33. Some of the children's favourite parts of the playground are the wide grass areas. Children go there to play football, tag and rounders. They also consider them *“good for imaginary games,”* and find it fun to roll or slide down the big hill. According to one child, the main benefit of this free play space left between the pieces of equipment is that they can *“play there after you get bored with swings.”*

12.34. Another area where children play in groups is a wide grass area in the middle of the playground with two small goals posts. When, for example two children play there, they just exercise using goals posts. When there is a large group there, they often play football.

12.35. Children also found attractive two small hills with wooden trunks placed on top, one of which is shown on Figure 13. In contrast, the logs and stones area at the bottom of the hill are perceived by 29% of children as 'boring' and not challenging. While they consider that it might be fun to run across the logs, children were cautious that playing there might be dangerous since they "may fall off and hurt themselves." Similarly, wooden steps leading to the top of the small hill were regarded as challenging, although a number of children already had a bad experience; they either have tripped on the steps or fell off and hit themselves on the stones. However, the fear that they might trip on the steps does not necessarily put children off from playing there. A number of children who have already had a bad experience and the majority expressed concern about the safety of these places.

Figure 13: Places on the Gores Marsh playground children don't like very much



Children's perception of the improved play spaces are obtained through cognitive mapping exercise that corroborates the findings from questionnaires. Children were asked to place green dots to show places they liked in the playground. Yellow dots indicated places they disliked, and red dots were put in places they perceived as dangerous (Figure 14).

Figure 14: A cognitive map of Gores Marsh playground: A summary of results



12.36. Older children come to the playground in groups and just sit on one of the hills for half an hour. Others, come on scooters or bikes, make a couple of rounds along the paths and leave the playground. On one occasion two boys were observed playing for half hour on one of the hills, fully dressed as soldiers. Children who play football stay the longest. They are usually, age nine and ten years old. Often, this play is regulated by a parent who stays there and gives them instructions.

Duration of separate play activities

- 12.37. Children stay on the playground, on average, for ten to fifteen minutes on workdays. Sometimes, especially small groups of girls, just sit there for a while and then go to play and then sit down again and chat for another ten to fifteen minutes. Younger children, age eight or nine usually play together in the cup. This play lasts between five to ten minutes.
- 12.38.** Children usually move from place to place and go back to some of the places where they previously played. Younger children, age eight or nine, move more frequently between play spaces than older children, so their play normally does not last as long. The majority of children's play activities were closely related to the use of play equipment. However, play activities, such as ball games, tag games or imaginary games, tend to last longer. Some children come to the playground and sit in groups, usually on one of the mounds.

Oldbury Court Park: destination playground

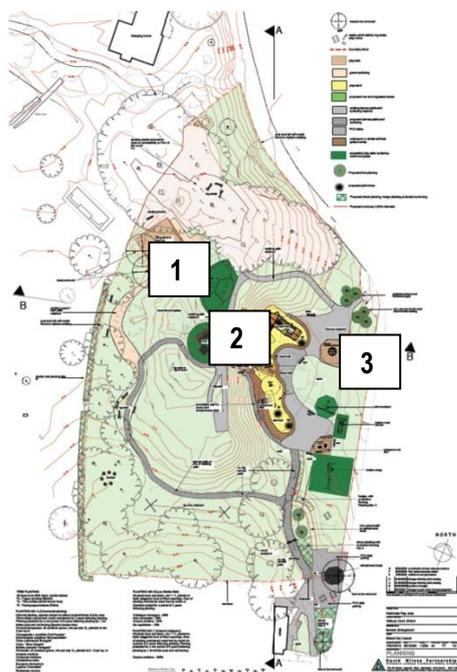
- 12.39. Oldbury Court Park (Figure 15) - previously Vassalls Park - playground is located in the heart of Fishponds area in Bristol. It is a large destination park which has been fully redesigned and rebuilt through the funding provided by the Play Pathfinder programme.

Figure 15: Oldbury Court playground before the interventions



- 12.40. The playground design is mainly focused around the use of water in play. Generally, it consists of several interconnected play areas which cater for children of various ages. For example, the lower part of the playground has a large area covered in sand where children between two and five years old play. The upper part of the playground, on the top of the hill, has been designed and is used by older children, over the age of seven.
- 12.41. Consultations with children were carried out in Oldbury Court and St. Mathias and Dr. Bell primary schools. Both schools are located close to the Oldbury Court playground. The park itself is a major Bristol City destination park which draws in children from other areas of Bristol and further afield. However, we involved children from these schools in the research because they are familiar with the playground as they play there daily. Altogether fifty-eight children, ranging between ten and thirteen years old, took part in the consultations.

Figure 16: New design solution for the Oldbury Court playground



1 Play area with equipment, play ship and sand mainly for younger children

2 Play area with water, stone slabs and slides for the children of various age

3 The upper part of the playground with play equipment and landscaping for older children

12.42. The new playground (Figure 16) contains three general types of play spaces. The first type is a space with the standard play equipment. The majority of these play spaces are designed for smaller children and they are located on the lower part of the playground. The second type is a 'natural play design' which is located in the middle area of the playground linking the upper with lower part through the series of large stone slabs, water play, pumps and slides. The third type is landscape play space, mainly grass areas with stones, or logs and seats.

Attendance on the playground

12.43. Evidence about children's attendance was collected through daily and weekly observations of the playground. Observations were conducted during the school terms and on weekends. As this is a large playground the number of children present is considerably higher than at any other playground we have observed. It needs to be noted that, for example, twenty-five children playing in Gores Marsh would occupy fully Gores Marsh playground, while fifty-six children in Oldbury Court would make it a busy playground but not fully occupied. As expected, the number of children fluctuated during the day. The busiest time is immediately after school ends about 3.30 p.m. Younger children, age between one and four years, are usually still on the playground around 3.30 p.m., when older school children start arriving. On average, there were fifty to sixty children playing in Oldbury Court on a nice sunny day. This number would normally fall after 4.00 p.m., when younger children leave. This, however, is usually the time when teenagers start coming to the playground and park. Although they often don't stay there to play and they come and go frequently. The busiest times on the playground are Saturday afternoon and Sunday mid day, if weather permitting. The number of children increases up to seventy and eighty. Overall, this is a well-attended park with the capacity to cater for even more children.

Places to play

12.44. There is a variety of places to play on the Oldbury Court playground. They can generally be divided into three main zones. The lower level of the playground, close to café, is used primarily by small children, while the upper part is for older children and teenagers. Located on the age of the playground is a wooden ship. This is a play space used by all children, age of five to fifteen. The middle area of the playground connects the lower and upper part as well as the play ship. It is a landscape designed area in a form of large steps made of stone slabs, water pumps and pieces of play equipment which all involve water.

12.45. The range of play equipment is quite large and includes several types of swings, see saws, bridges, climbing nets etc. In the upper part of the playground there are located big logs and stones, a path and an area with benches. This section is closely connected to the wood and the rest of Oldbury Court Park area.

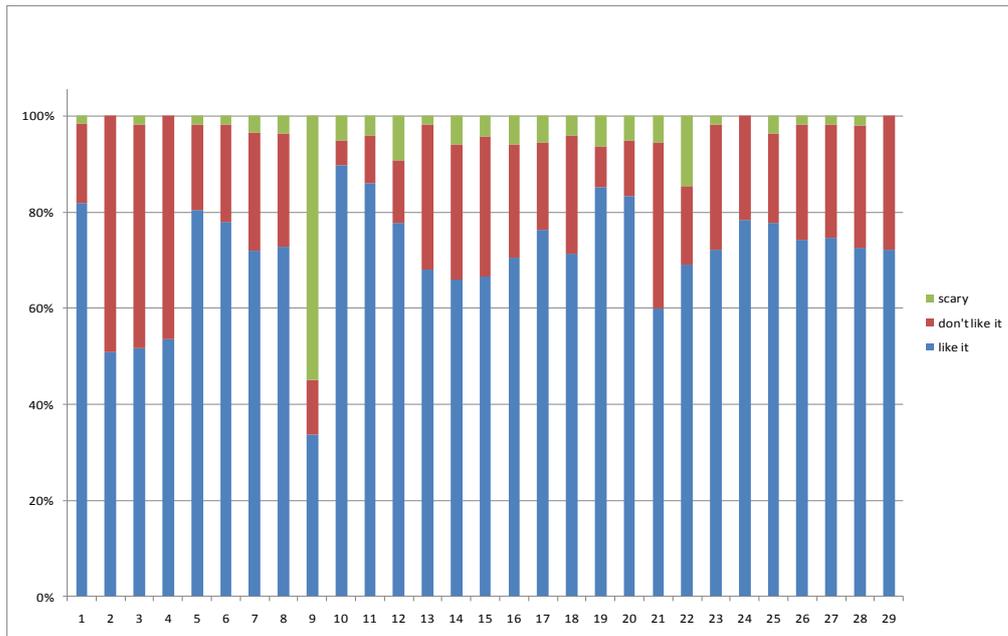


Table 62: Results of the analysis of pictorial questionnaire show how children perceive different places in the playground.

Overall, it was concluded that:

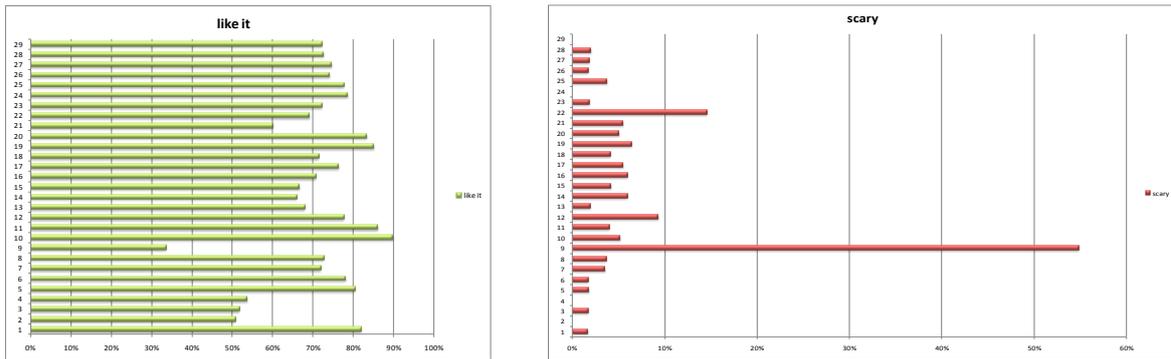
- the most popular place in the playground was the play-ship, 90% of children like this playspace (Fig 14);
- a long slide was the next most popular place (86%), followed by the skysurf (85%);
- 55% of children perceived the steps formed from stone slabs as the scariest place on the playground;
- children do not like the swings, see saw and small rocker in the lower play area. This result is not unusual given that we consulted children age eleven and twelve. For them these are 'very childish' play spaces.

Figure 17: Children's favourite places in the Oldbury Court playground



12.46. Table 61 shows the results of the analysis of which places children dislike. It is evident that the least popular place was the stone steps because children are scared of them as shown in Figure 18. Many children commented that they fear of slipping down and hurting themselves.

Figure 18: Results showing children's assessment of places they 'like' and places they perceive as 'scary'.



12.47. The evidence gathered shows that the introduction of water into play was successful because children enjoy playing with water. They like 'carrying water around' and find it 'fun to spin.' Teenagers also enjoy playing with water. They frequently come to fill their water guns, bottles and balloons and take them to the green field outside the playground to play and 'fight' with.

12.48. The cognitive mapping exercise reflected children's perception of the various places in the playground. Green dots showed places they liked in the playground. Yellow dots indicated places they disliked, and red dots were placed on places they perceived as dangerous.

Figure 19: A cognitive map of the playground confirm the findings from questionnaires analysis



12.49. Although the evaluation of the Play Pathfinder focused only on children age between eight and thirteen, it is important to report that Oldbury Court Park supports play successfully for all age groups. Teenagers' presence was noticeable in the early hours of summer afternoons but they did not interrupt the play of younger children. Similarly, small children stayed within their own play area.

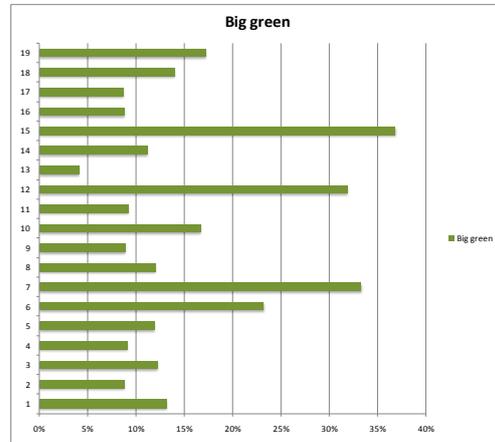
12.50. Often, children, two or three at a time, can be seen riding bikes on the playground and stopping to get on the play ship or slide. Other children do not perceive this is a dangerous or threatening activity, which interferes with their play. Usually, they carry on playing since the space comfortably accommodates both activities at the same time.

Use of play equipment

12.51. There was a slight discrepancy between the results of the questionnaire analysis and cognitive mapping. The results of the cognitive mapping exercise, where we assessed only nineteen play spaces, revealed that children's favourite piece of play equipment is the 'Skysurf.' It received the maximum amount of big green dots, as shown in Figure 20.

12.52. The evidence from the analysis and observations showed that play equipment has a crucial role in sustaining children's play on this playground. However, younger children, up to age ten, use the majority of the equipment. Older children tend to play on the water play, which connects several play spaces. Children play there by gradually progressing up (or down) the hill and stay occupied for longer periods of time. Often, play activities there spontaneously develop into group play.

Figure 20: Children favourite play equipment is the sky surf (37%), followed by the ship (33%) and slide (32%)



12.53. Another successful play space which attracts children of various age groups, is the wooden ship. Children play there mainly in groups, depending on their age. They tend to stay within a small domain on the ship and not mix with other groups. In the lower part of the playground, the orbiter roundabout is a very popular place to play. Children usually sit there in groups either to rest or to chat with other children. More active and energetic children usually push the roundabout.

Use of landscape play spaces

12.54. There are some landscaped areas in Oldbury Court playground and they are mainly located in the upper part of the playground. These are grassed areas with large stones and big wooden logs. Many children were seen playing there and some commented that places like this make them happy. They often go there on their own to take a short break from playing.

Figure 21: Duration of separate play activities



12.55. The longest lasting play activities observed on this playground were children playing with water and on the ship. All other play, including swings, orbiter and 'Skysurf.' lasted a maximum of ten minutes. The play with water was a continuous activity of seven and eight years old for at least half an hour. Some children stayed there approximately three hours on a sunny Saturday afternoon in June. A possible explanation for this might be that during their play they had formed small groups and occasionally run short water fights, which made their play more interesting and longer lasting. The play ship was another place where children stayed between fifteen minutes to half an hour. Play on the swings, rockers, see saw and slides did not normally last very long time.

12.56. **St. Paul's/St Agnes Park**

12.57. St Paul's Park (Figure 22) is an important neighbourhood green space located in a densely built-up inner-city area. The redevelopment of the existing park was a major undertaking (Figure 23), which joined St. Paul's Park with the existing adventure park.

Figure 22: St. Paul's playground before the interventions



12.58. For children and their families, there is specialist toddlers' and juniors' play equipment and seating within a fenced area. The second section of the park is an adventure playground which is dedicated for use by teenagers. There is an area for basketball, a climbing wall and a net, swings and a newly created wooden bridges area.

12.59. Consultations with children were carried out with a Year 6 class in Cabot Primary and Junior School. Children were asked to answer pictorial questionnaires and complete a cognitive mapping exercise. The investigators asked them for some additional clarification of their responses in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of their perceptions and opinions.

Figure 23: New design solution for the St. Paul's/St. Paul's playground



- 1** Surfaced area with play equipment
- 2** Grassed area with sitting and super swing
- 3** Play ship and sand
- 4** Adventure playground

Attendance on the playground

12.60. Evidence collected through observations showed that both parts of this playground are very busy, during the week and on weekends. During the week, small children age four to eight years with their parents, stop there to play after school and stay for approximately one to two hours. Usually, there are between thirteen and seventeen children on the ship and sand area of the playground. The adventure playground is attended not only by older children and teenagers, but also by younger children. The busiest day and time is usually Saturday afternoon. This is the time when various activities take place simultaneously. For example, the basketball area is often used by three or four boys who play football, while wooden structures are full of children running up and down or climbing

on the frames. At the same time, groups of small children often move into the adventure playground on small scooters and bikes, which they take from the existing play building. Often there can be seen between thirty-five to forty children on the playground.

Places to play

This playground (Figure 24) contains four distinctive play areas:

- a) an area with a range of play equipment (a double see saw, trampoline, swings and a slide) covered with surface rubber;
- b) grass area with super rope and swinger and small sitting area;
- c) play ship area with softwood bridges and sand;
- d) adventure playground completely separated from the rest of the play areas by a high fence and open only under the supervision of the play workers.

Figure 24: Four distinctive areas of the playground



12.61. The evidence collected (Table 62) suggests that children of all ages enjoy playing on this playground. The atmosphere on this playground is very lively and children generally have a great time playing there.

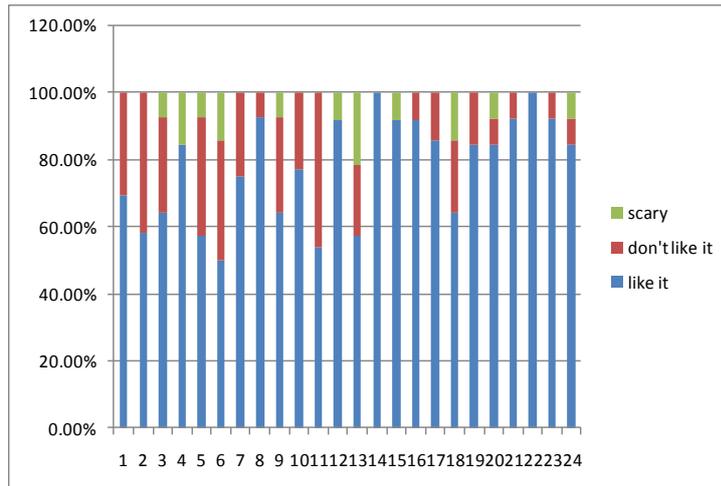
Table 63: The summary of findings from pictorial questionnaires

Play space	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 5	S 6	S 7	S 8	S 9	S 10	S 11	S 12	G 13	G 14	B 15	B 16	B 17	B 18	B 19	B 20	B 21	B 22	B 23	B 24
like it	9	7	9	11	8	7	9	13	9	10	7	11	8	12	11	11	12	9	11	11	12	13	12	11
don't like it	4	5	4	0	5	5	3	1	4	3	6	0	3	0	0	1	2	3	2	1	1	0	1	1
scary	0	0	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1
sum	13	12	14	13	14	14	12	14	14	13	13	12	14	12	12	12	14	14	13	13	13	13	13	13
like it %	69%	58%	64%	85%	57%	50%	75%	93%	64%	77%	54%	92%	57%	10%	92%	92%	86%	64%	85%	85%	92%	10%	92%	85%
don't like it %	31%	42%	29%	0%	36%	36%	25%	7%	29%	23%	46%	0%	21%	0%	0%	8%	14%	21%	15%	8%	8%	0%	8%	8%
scary %	0%	0%	7%	15%	7%	14%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	8%	21%	0%	8%	0%	0%	14%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	8%

Overall, the results of the questionnaire analysis show that:

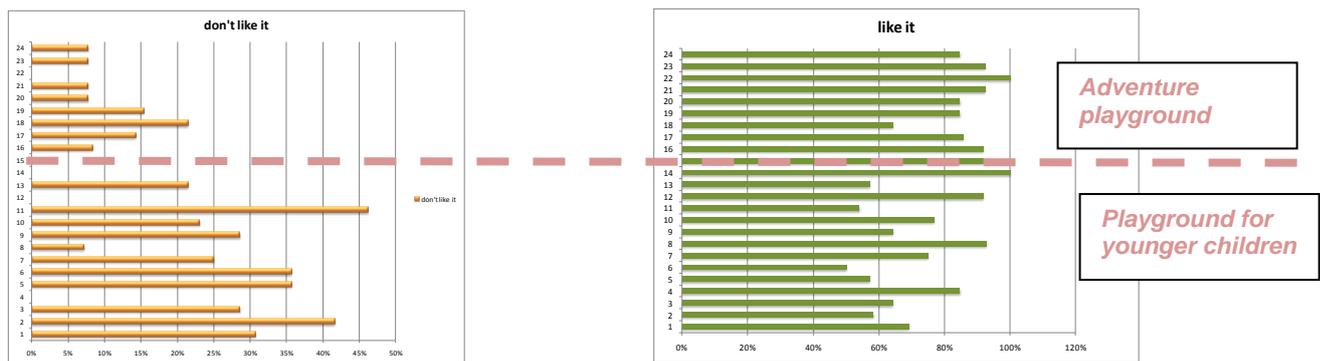
- two favourite play spaces on the playground are a wooden bridge leading to the play ship and the play ship itself;
- children also enjoy playing on the super rope swing;
- the majority of children don't like a carousel and a stone feature with water located in the sand area, next to the play ship;
- the scariest places on the playground are: an area with wooden logs located in the park, super rope and swing and a carousel;
- children's favourite place on the adventure playground is a wooden structure located in the middle with a slide, net and steps, which supports well a variety of play;
- the least liked place on this part of the playground is a climbing net.

Figure 25: Results of the analysis of pictorial questionnaires



12.62. Figure 25 shows that children possess different values about the small and adventure playgrounds. Play spaces indicated as number 15 are located on the adventure playground. This is probably because the play ship area is an area where only younger children tend to play. In addition, the play in the rubber- surfaced area is equipment-based and the spaces are designed for children under the age of eight (Figure 26).

Figure 26 Children's assessment of places on the St. Paul's/St. Paul's playground



12.63. The evidence also shows that children age eight to thirteen generally prefer the adventure playground more than the other areas in this part of this playground. This corroborates the findings from the analyses of other playgrounds, which demonstrate that some play equipment was deemed by this age group of children as 'babyish.' Children appear to prefer more challenging (sometimes even scary) play spaces and group play. Few children of this age were seen playing or sitting on their own. They usually come in groups of two or three, meet their friends on the playground and get involved in the play. This is not necessarily always active play, like playing basketball as a team, rather it is a type of play where children do whatever they want to do and then come back to the group where some children just sit and talk.

Use of equipment

12.64. A number of children do not like the swings which are located on the small playground covered with the rubber. They perceive this equipment as a 'childish' and dislike it because "swings are for babies." A Similar explanation was given for a double see-saw. However, observations show that this see-saw is actually one of the most used pieces of equipment for a group play. Children of different ages, often friends and relatives, come together to play, staying there sometimes for ten to twelve minutes. It was interesting to observe very little segregation between children on this playground in terms of their age. Smaller children, age three to six, play with fourteen and fifteen years old and have a good time together. The super rope and swinger is one of the places where play is shared by large groups of children of various ages. Occasionally, there was up to ten children on the swing at the same time.

12.65. The analysis of cognitive mapping exercise confirms some findings from the pictorial questionnaire. For example, super swing received the largest number of big green dots, which children used to mark their favourite places (see Fig.27 and 29).

Figure 27: A table and diagram show children's favourite play spaces on the playground

	Green 01	Green 02
like it	4	3
don't like it	7	6
scary	4	7
B GREEN	4	1
sum	19	17
like it	21%	18%
don't like it	37%	35%
scary	21%	18%
B GREEN	21%	6%

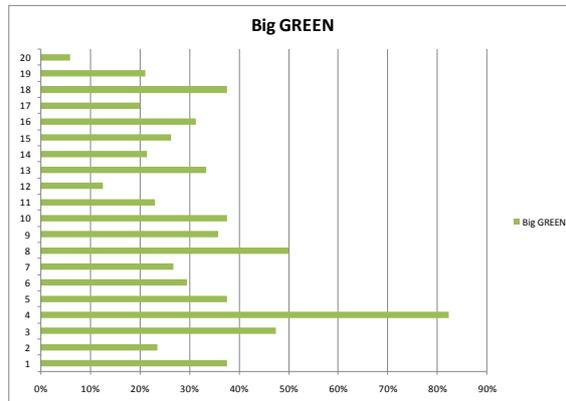
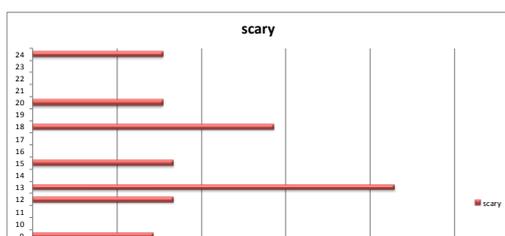


Figure 28: Cognitive map of the St. Paul's/St. Paul's playground



- 12.66. It was interesting to observe very little segregation between children on this playground in terms of their age. The super rope and swinger is one of the places where play is shared by a large group of children of various ages.
- 12.67. The analysis of the questionnaire (Figure 27) shows that the majority of children find the super swing (15%) and the orbiter (14%) scary. Their comments suggest that children still use this play equipment although it makes them 'dizzy' or they get 'butterflies in the stomach'.

Figure 29: Places on the playground which children perceive as 'scary' and to what extent. The most scariest piece of equipment is the orbiter.



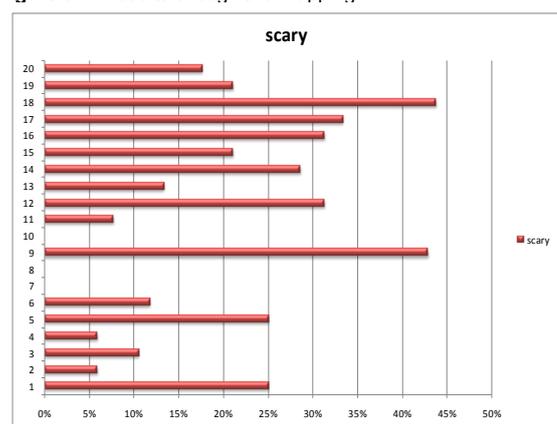
Use of landscaped play areas

12.68. Landscaped play areas were not very popular among children age between eight to thirteen. Generally, children said they liked them but not many were observed playing there. These are places mainly used by teenagers in the afternoon during school terms or mid morning on weekends. Teenagers gathering there in small groups of five or six, usually spending quite a long time (between half an hour and an hour) laughing and chatting. Young children do not go there to play unless they walk home with parents when they stop to walk on logs or stones for a while. This is partly because these two play spaces are quite remote from the playground, located deep in St. Paul's Park (Fig. 27).

Figure 30: Landscaped areas with logs and stones in St. Paul's park

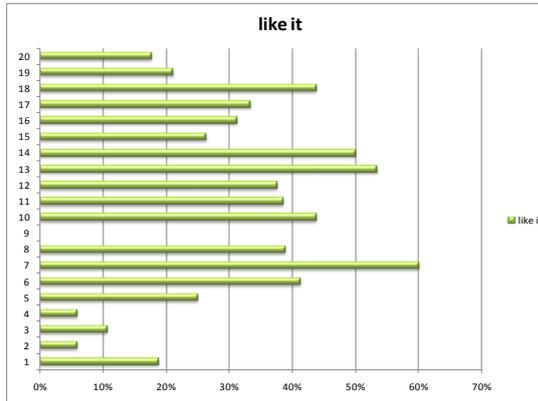


Figure 31: Results of cognitive mapping



Children generally perceive the adventure park area and landscaped play spaces as more scary than areas with the play equipment (Fig 28). More precisely, they find the adventure playground more scary than any other part of the playground. When asked to explain why, their answers suggest the following two main reasons. Firstly, there is a considerable difference between how children perceive play spaces within the age group from eight to thirteen assessed. The majority of children under the age of ten find the adventure play ground areas scary. This is not a case with older children, who find the play spaces exciting and challenging. Secondly, children are aware of the safety testing of the standard play equipment. Thus, they are considerably less concerned about possible accidents and injuries. It appears that there is a fine distinction between fear, risk and challenge, which children experience on this playground (figure 29). In addition, the study corroborated findings from the previous studies, which argue that the perception of risk and fear is dependent not only on the type of play space but also on the age of a child. This makes a generalisation on this subject a difficult task. One particular feature, that all children dislike and at the same time find it scary.

Figure 32: Results of cognitive mapping



Duration of separate play activities

- 12.69. Play activities on this playground last much longer than on any other playground assessed and involve large groups of children. This is particularly the case for the adventure playground because the choice of play spaces there is greater than on any other playground, but also because the majority of children who come to the adventure playground are age over ten years and can move around the playground and play without supervision. Boys come to this playground in groups and play football for twenty to twenty-five minutes on average. These groups often split and children go to different areas to play. Running on the wooden structures and climbing on the frames are activities which last mainly between five and ten minutes. Younger children come to the adventure playground area on small carts and improvised scooters and drive around for approximately half an hour, occasionally stopping to play with something else.
- 12.70. The play ship area with sand is mainly used by small children and toddlers. Their play time is usually fairly short, between ten and fifteen minutes. Children are supervised all the time by their parents and the play on particular sections of the play ship is very short, changing places after only a couple of minutes spent there. The longest time that children spend playing on this section of the play ground is in the sand and going up and down the slide. If they find company to play with, their play can last as long as fifteen minutes. Otherwise they have a go on the slide for just a few minutes.
- 12.71. The play equipment in the area covered with the rubber surface is quite popular among children of all ages; children spend fifteen minutes there, on average. Often groups of girls of various ages play on the double swing for five to seven minutes. They move from there to the super swing and rope, where they play together, usually for up to ten minutes. Younger children play on slide for maximum of ten minutes then usually move to the swings. The duration of the play there is approximately the same as on the slide. Children also play on a small trampoline built into the surface of the playground but for not more than five minutes due to restrictions of space.

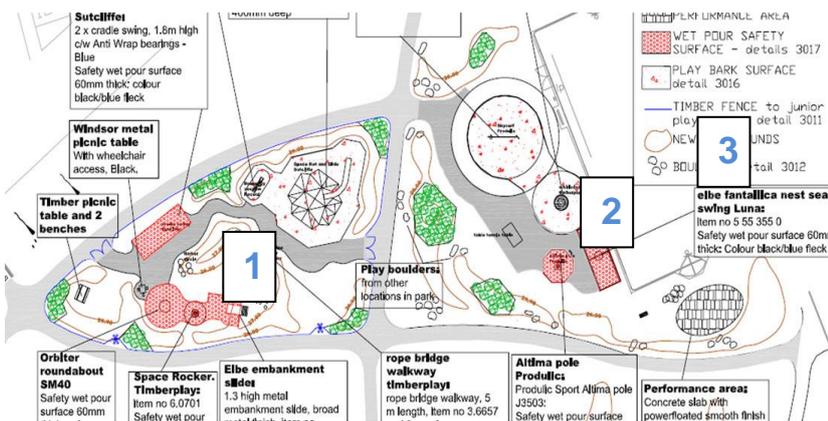
Netham Park playground

12.72. Netham Park and Pavilion (Figure 33) is a major park and an area of open green space in East Bristol, with facilities for leisure, social, sport and recreational activities. Netham Park includes a number of football pitches for adult and junior teams, a cricket pitch, and an area for other sports, such as lacrosse. There is a pavilion building which houses changing rooms with hot showers for sports teams and officials, public toilets, a community room and kiosk, and staff offices. The community room is used during the winter months as a play space. The new playground is located on North side, close to the main entrance to the park (Figure 34).

Figure 33: Location of the playground within the Netham Park area before the changes made by the Play Pathfinder investment



Figure 34: The layout of the Netham Park playground with three distinct play areas



1 Playground for young children

2 Play area for older children

3 Basketball-football enclosed play area

12.73. The evaluation of this playground was a complex task because the new playground contains three different play areas designed for different ages. In addition, the Play Rangers use the green area outside of the playgrounds, adjacent to the road (Table 63).

Attendance on the playground

12.74. The majority of children use this playground on weekends and Tuesdays afternoons when Play Rangers organise the play. On the weekends, the busiest place is the playground for younger children. Children were observed playing there as early as 9.00 a.m. on Saturday mornings.

12.75. On a couple of Saturdays, during school holidays, we recorded twelve children on the part 1 of the playground, seven children playing and sitting in the area 2 and nine boys playing football in the fenced area 3 of the Netham playground. Typically, during summer, on weekends there were approximately ten to twelve children playing on various parts of the playground at different times during the day.

12.76. Children age between eight and thirteen come to play only in the afternoons during school term. They come after school finishes, between 3.30 and 4.30 p.m. It has to be noted that we made this observation since the playground was officially opened, only during the summer. The attendance pattern during autumn and winter months may be different.

12.77. The middle part of this playground, part 2, is used by children of all ages. Young children play in twos and threes. Older children often play and sit there in groups of six to ten moving from one piece of equipment to another. A lot of children arrive here on bikes, usually in pairs or small groups and then join others. Thus the number of children

present on this part of the playground fluctuates frequently. Sometimes, there are no children at all, but half an hour later there could be up to fifteen teenagers.

12.78. The fenced area with hard surface (part 3) is the most used part of the playground during week. Small groups of three to five boys, tend to play football there. On Tuesdays when the Play Rangers come to Netham Park, there are usually twelve to fourteen children at the time playing football with Rangers.

Places to play

As stated earlier, this playground contains three distinct play areas with different character and purpose. They are:

- 1) playground for young children;
- 2) play area for older children;
- 3) basketball-football enclosed play area.

Playground for young children

12.79. The design of this play area combines landscaped play spaces and play equipment. Younger children always visit first the dedicated younger children play area. They seldom play on the adjacent part 2 of the playground because the equipment located there is designed for older children. Once or twice they were seen playing on the large nest seat swing but together with some older children. Figure 35 shows the area of the playground landscaped and the play spaces, which are combined with new and standard pieces of the play equipment.

Figure 35: Different play equipment in Netham Park



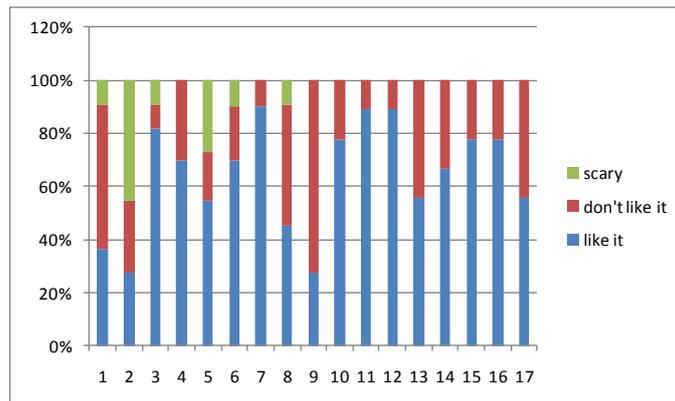
12.80. The results of the pictorial questionnaire analysis suggest that children, although they have their favourite and less favourite places, generally like this play area. This playground is also used by small children and toddlers brought there by their parents.

Table 64: Results of children's responses to pictorial questionnaire

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
like it	4	3	9	7	6	7	9	5	3	7	8	8	5	6	7	7	5
don't like it	6	3	1	3	2	2	1	5	8	2	1	1	4	3	2	2	4
scary	1	5	1	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUM	11	11	11	10	11	10	10	11	11	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
like it	36%	27%	82%	70%	55%	70%	90%	45%	27%	78%	89%	89%	56%	67%	78%	78%	56%
don't like it	55%	27%	9%	30%	18%	20%	10%	45%	73%	22%	11%	11%	44%	33%	22%	22%	44%
scary	9%	45%	9%	0%	27%	10%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

12.81. The layout of the playground and design and location of the play equipment allows very good supervision of children playing. An adult standing can see most of the playground at the same time. The play can also be supervised from the benches located strategically near the play spaces where children usually stay for longer periods.

Figure 36: Children responses to play spaces on the playground



1) Playground area 2

12.82. The part 2 of this playground is designed and used by older children, age from ten to fifteen. This middle area is open and very accessible. A number of children who come here usually leave their bikes in this area and go to play.

12.83. The fenced area of the playground (part 3, see Fig.37) is very popular play area among older children and teenagers. This area is used during the week and on weekends, often regardless of the weather. Its primary function is for sports such as basketball and football. Thus, it is mainly used by boys; girls were not observed playing there. This is also an area regularly used by Play Rangers for organising short football matches and other competitions for children.



Figure 37: Fenced area of the Netham playground which is mainly used by older

children

Use of equipment

12.84. The evidence shows that children like the majority of the play equipment on this playground. Their favourite place here is a bridge, followed by two types of slides shown in Figure 38. This evidence further corroborates that children like playing on the traditional play equipment.

Figure 38: Children's favourite places on the playground



12.85. Results show that the swings, the Ultima sport pole, a table for table tennis and a landscaped section of the playground for younger children, are the least liked play spaces on the Netham playground.

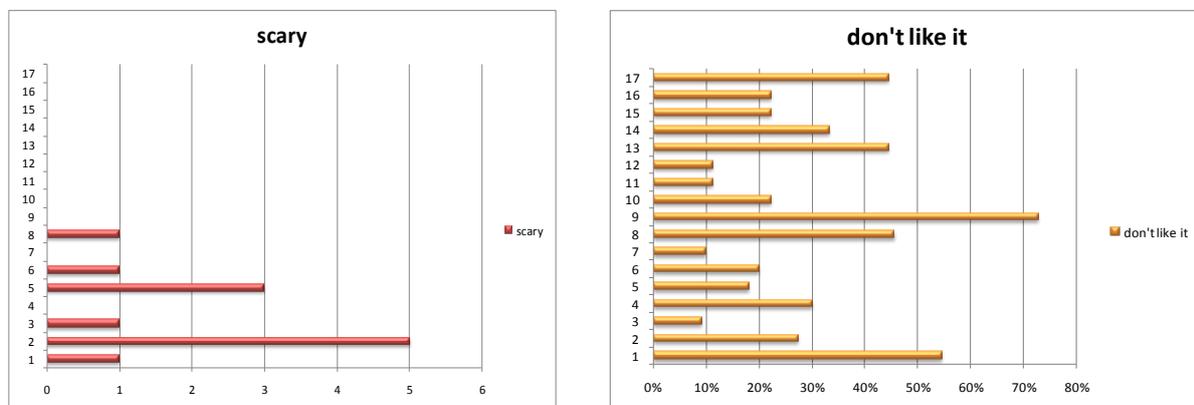
12.86. They also show that very few play spaces on this playground are perceived as 'scary' (Fig. 35). However, children clearly discriminate between suitable and not suitable equipment for their age. This is confirmed by the assessment of Ultima sport pole, which 47% of the children aged between eight and ten, find it very 'scary' and 27% don't like it. This is not a surprising finding, given that this pole is designed mainly for teenagers to use. A proportion of 27% of children find a sky surf 'scary' piece of play equipment, but the majority of children like it (55%).

12.87. These are very different findings from children's perception of the swings. The majority of children (73%) don't like swings. This is because, as shown in the analyses of other playgrounds, children of this age find such play equipment very 'childish.' They simply don't want be seen playing there because swings are mainly used by very small children often age two or younger, who are accompanied by their parents.

Table 65: This diagram shows that the results of questionnaire analysis of which play spaces children perceive as 'scary'.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
scary	9%	45%	9%	0%	27%	10%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Figure 39: Children's assessment of 'scary' and play spaces they 'don't like'



Use of landscaped play areas

12.88. Children of all ages like the landscaped areas on this playground. They are very versatile and as our observations show suitable for children of all ages. Children use these areas more for social activities than for play. We observed boys and girls playing on the equipment for a while, and afterwards going to a mound to sit down, chat, and relax. Often, these spaces are also occupied by toddlers and their parents. On dry days, parents usually sit on the grass and supervise their children walking around and exploring the area. Because they have soft landscaped and grass areas, they seem to be very convenient and safe for a very young children.

12.89. In addition, older children use these areas too. They tend to come when the playground is empty, which is normally late afternoon. They either sit around the small wooden table or just relax on the grass. Girls age about twelve come here in groups and spend between fifteen and thirty minutes socialising.

Duration of separate play activities

12.90. On this playground, children frequently move from the part 1 to part 2 and back. The average length of play is between fifteen and thirty minutes. Children playing in the area designated for basketball and football stay there longer than in any other part of the playground. If they play in large groups their play lasts for one to two hours. Often children come to this play area on their own and they use this time to practice (for example, throwing a ball into the basketball net) sometimes for up to one hour.

12.91. Other types of play, such as younger children playing in the part 1 of the playground, last considerably shorter. Young children spend a maximum of ten minutes on a piece of play equipment. Landscaped areas such as hills with logs and stones sustain their play for even shorter period of time, up to five minutes. Occasionally, if this children age up to eight years, come in groups of three to five, their play lasts longer, especially on the climbing frame. We observed groups of children playing there for fifteen to twenty minutes.

12.92. Older children who are the primary users of part 2 of the playground, where they spend sometimes over fifteen minutes on a particular type of play activity. The most popular, which keeps the children occupied for the longest period of time here, is the nest seat swing. Sometimes up to three children come to play there together. It was interesting to observe that the concrete table for table tennis is well used by older children.

Conclusions

ST AGNES ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

- 12.93. Generally residents and visitors believe that the improvements carried out in St. Paul's Adventure Playground made this community park better than before. Traditionally the area was used by the community and children were usually coming here on their own.
- 12.94. After the improvements, not only St. Paul's Community children are using the facilities, but also visitors from nearby communities like St. Werburgh, Easton, Barton Hill and Montpelier are coming to enjoy the new play equipment.
- 12.95. The Children's Centre has benefited from the improvements and other youth and children organisations, like Full Circle Youth Centre, use the park and its facilities. On a standard organised activities day, children are usually left on their own by parents on their way to work. There is a registration process and play equipment like balls, bicycles, tricycles and other are taken out. Staff will coordinate games and other activities like crafts, ping pong and pool indoors and mediate if there is any conflict or misbehaviour. There is a kitchen on site where snacks and drinks are given to children registered in the Children's Centre or sold to other park users. The days when organised activities are programmed there is a higher number of users in the park.
- 12.96. Residents rely on these set activities to leave their children while at work. Many of them praising the improvements and organisers, but at the same time there is a general opinion that the hours when the centre is open are not enough and children and teenagers are often seen to climb over the fence and closed gate of the play adventure area.
- 12.97. In the opinion of few Residents, Play Rangers have a positive influence in the park as they believe that play activities staff increase the sense of safety even when not present. There are worries among users that the number of children per number of staff is too high, thus putting pressure on the organisers.
- 12.98. Regular police visits by designated police officers that are involved with community organisations improve the feeling of safety on users and children and staff treat them with respect and familiarity. At the same time police officers although not being residents, feel connected with the community, as they participate in community meetings and are familiar with most residents that use the park.
- 12.99. There are mixed opinions from neighbours who live nearby and have been directly affected by the improvements and their effect. Issues like noise, antisocial behaviour, drug dealing and drug use and tree landscape. Tree landscape is an issue that has made some residents happy and others dissatisfied as they are affected by the shade and fallen leaves. They believe that there is need of antisocial deterrents like cameras, better lighting and supervision staff during late hours.
- 12.100. There is a broad feeling that the community has benefited from the improvements carried out, the enhancement to the character of the neighbourhood and the better use of the area.

OLDBURY COURT

As a destination park most of park users are visitors from other areas in the city.

- 12.101. Users have expressed that there is need for a safe toddler's area with age related equipment, in order to keep babies and toddlers away from the busier older children's play areas. There is also request to provide a cycle parking encourage the cycling. The car park can be very busy at times and neighbours have expressed their concerns about visitors coming by cars.

NETHAM PARK

- 12.102. Neighbours have expressed that they feel that information about the consultation process had to be more efficient; they claimed that if they knew, they would have participated in the planning and consultation processes. There is a general opinion that more play equipment is needed for toddlers and younger children. Participants feel that the bark used in the open play area should be replaced as some children have had splinters and animals soil it and this gets absolved by the fibres. There is discontent with the wild flower area as it is permanently fenced and users feel that a more interactive use would be better. Many park users see the need of more facilities for teenagers, BMX and skate ramps or a more challenging climbing facility. Although they enjoy

the enclosed ball court, many teenagers who feel not catered for and have to go all the way to St. George's Park to use the bike and skate facilities.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- 13.1. The Play Pathfinder programme made the play areas more accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children. The programme has improved the provision for children with disabilities to participate successfully in their play. Overall, it contributed to meeting National Indicator 140 (Tackling exclusion and promoting quality).
- 13.2. The programme was successful in meeting the needs of a wide range of children from different backgrounds and abilities. It attracted children and parents from ethnic minority backgrounds. In community play areas, the effectiveness of inclusion is less evident. The improvements made it possible for different age groups to play together. Play areas were versatile and met children's needs. The presence of teenagers was not generally welcomed.
- 13.3. The Consultation process on the design of play area was effective. Comments on whether the play area meets their needs were listened to and valued. Respondents' acknowledged that they received sufficient information about the changes to be made to the existing play areas. They were positive about the prompt answers they received to their queries and concerns about the design of the play areas. The changes made to the design have been communicated to them effectively. They felt that they made a positive contribution to the consultation process. However, some residents were not fully aware of the consultation process or were not sufficiently engaged in it. Overall, it was found that the consultation process was more effective in community led play areas and less effective in destination parks.
- 13.4. Over 1200 children were involved in the consultation process. These children were mainly engaged through schools. Staff used a range of methods to gather people's views and inform them about the impact of the programme. Use of a pictorial questionnaire with children, proved more successful as it generated a wealth of information about children's needs and expectations. It also allowed children to express their views and preferences for the type of play and play equipment. A range of methods were used to gather adults' views and inform them about the impact of the programme. The methods employed included events, questionnaire surveys and focus groups. These events were well-attended and generated a large amount of information. Site visits to a selection of playgrounds was a successful engagement method, as it helped in establishing a meaningful dialogue between the designers, children and the local residents. Some methods such as questionnaire surveys, were not as effective (lower response rate).
- 13.5. It emerged that the design of some play areas, such as Gores Marsh, facilitated informal supervision from nearby houses and roads. In community parks, informal supervision and safety was provided by adults living in the neighbourhood. The play areas offered a variety of on-site adults' supervision. Providing for informal supervision in destination parks was more difficult as they attract a variety of users from a large catchment area. Generally, it was believed that the improvements helped to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- 13.6. Staffed areas by playworkers and voluntary groups increased the feeling of safety. Play Rangers improved children's play and contributed to building community capacity. They helped to manage risks and challenges more effectively, they also minimised parents' fears and concerns about their children's safety. Substantial numbers of children and visitors participated in events and most children were unaccompanied. However, it emerged that a large number of participants in the research were unaware of their presence and activities.
- 13.7. The study found increased use by community and visitors during both weekdays and weekends. Community parks were predominantly used by local children, parents and community and Destination parks also attract a great number of visitors from other areas. The playgrounds included in this study attract a great deal of a variety of users for other activities (socialising, dog walking, jogging, hanging out...), however there is little inter-generation interactions.
- 13.8. There was a positive response to the design of the new play areas. Parents, children and members of the community were positive about the recent improvements. There was also agreement that there is good balance between play equipment and space for free play and that the play area makes good use of a variety of natural elements, such as the use of landform and vegetation, as well as elements such as wood and stones.
- 13.9. Parents reported that the improvements provided a wide range of play experiences. Design approaches added to their appeal and quality. Flexible layout was aesthetically pleasing and it allowed children to find easily their way

around the play areas. Paths stood out visually to enable children and other users to navigate their way around the area easily and safely

- 13.10. On average, over 18% of parents reported that their children made more than three friends as a result of the improvements. In community parks almost 37% of children made more than three friends. Nineteen percent of children made between two and three friends. This helped to meet NI 92-98 (Enjoyable time and better learning).
- 13.11. Fostering social interaction amongst children and increased their level of physical activity.
- 13.12. An impressive 41% percentage of children played more than an hour a day. These children met the minimum requirements of the international recommendations for daily Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA). Only less than 7% of children played less than half an hour daily. The programme has a significant effect on children's health (NI 199-Healthy Children and Young People). The challenge is to sustain this interest in playing outdoors for a longer periods of time.
- 13.13. 72% of children were engaged for more than thirty minutes daily in active play and over 250 children were physically active for more than half an hour daily. This is equivalent to 7500 hours of exercise. The total value of the health benefits of play in the Play Pathfinder areas is estimated to £1,447,875.

Key recommendations:

- 13.14. It is important to nurture and maintain effective consultation and engagement of all stakeholders from inception to completion. It emerged from the study that the ability to win people's trust can significantly affect the consultation process. If effectively engaged, those concerned are generally more willing to reach agreement, which may lead to less conflict and objections to the changes. In addition, effective engagement confers a greater sense of ownership of the projects, and stronger sense of being able to influence the project. Designers benefit from more up-to-date and relevant information, as well as constructive feedback. Conversely, miscommunications may lead to difficult relationships and obstacles in achieving consensus on a final design.
- 13.15. It emerged from the study that the design of play areas has improved informal supervision, involving mutual lookout for children's safety. This has been particularly effective in community parks where the presence of adults living in the community has contributed to informal supervision. The careful design of community parks, such as Gores Marsh, has also facilitated the supervision of children when they play outdoors. More houses with windows overlooking the play spaces made it easier for adults to keep an eye on children playing in the park. However, more needs to be done in the destination parks, where most of the play areas are not overlooked by houses in the vicinity of the parks.
- 13.16. The Pathfinder programme has designed in a level of risk in the play provision to make the playgrounds more challenging and appealing for children of different age groups and abilities. However, some of these features, such as the presence of large scattered stones, have raised the concerns of some parents and carers. It is important to educate parents and other members of the community about the benefits of providing a tolerable level of risk and challenge to children's play experience, health and well-being.
- 13.17. Play Rangers have a positive impact on children's outdoor play. They provide a wider range of play activities and contribute to the safety of the playgrounds. However, it was found that many respondents were not aware of their presence and activities. Consequently, information on Play Rangers and voluntary group activities and events needs to be improved.
- 13.18. Intergeneration activities need further nurturing. The Play Pathfinder programme has increased the variety of users from all ages and both gender. This includes walkers, joggers, and families with children. However, there are currently little intergeneration interactions. Activities and events that foster community relationships and interactions between generations should be encouraged.
- 13.19. The programme has provided a range of playscapes and a deliberate attempt to connect users to nature, using natural materials, such logs and water features. Further connectivity with nature, involving children and adults, could be achieved. This may involve activities such as tree planting and designing and maintaining 'community' vegetable gardens.
- 13.20. Generally, the programme has resulted in significant improvements in the accessibility and suitability of play environments for disabled children. More efforts are needed to reduce the marginalisation of disabled children by encouraging them and their families and carers to use more frequently the Play Pathfinder environments and facilities. This could be achieved by organising bespoke activities and events for disabled children and their families.

- 13.21. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the programme has fostered children from all backgrounds and ethnicities to making the best use of the improved play opportunities. However, more could be done to encourage a better use of community parks by children from different ethnic backgrounds.
- 13.22. More could be done to maximise the use of the provision in facilitating further community use and development. It is encouraged to continue developing existing plans to continue raising awareness of the benefits of outdoor play and encouraging local parents and carers to understand the value of managed risk. Initial work with primary schools should be maintained and developed, thus increasing the physical access to the outdoor play area and satisfying the remit of provision for children up of the age of eight. Regular and consistent outdoor play sessions should be offered to parents and children, as part of the general programme of activities offered by Sure Start Noddle Hill. This could be specifically targeted at the under fours to retain a focus on service provision for younger children. The local programme may also wish to consider increasing the availability of access to the outdoor play area. For example, the facilities could be made available to any parent with a young child in the area each morning or afternoon. An open outdoor play week could be held to raise awareness of the facilities and Sure Start parents may wish to become involved in planning and facilitating this. A banner advertising the site, and a free cup of tea for parents, may entice local families to use the facilities. The local press would also be a good source for encouraging parents to use the Lemon Tree site, particularly as the press has previously reported on parent's dismay at the fact that there are no safe public areas where very young children can play. Something that was also reported through the Sure Start parent satisfaction survey conducted by Sure Start Noddle Hill.
- 13.23. Although the main remit of the programme is to improve play opportunities, primarily for eight to thirteen year olds, future play strategies should include the extension of home play opportunities. Diversifying play opportunities, including street play, could encourage more quality play during weekdays and weekends.

Limitations of the study

- 13.24. There were significant changes to the delivery of the Play Pathfinder programme, which severely affected the timescale evaluation. The timescale for the implementation of the two waves of the programme was significantly reduced. The implementation of the programme needed to be completed by June 2010, leading to significant execution pressures. The constraints on the delivery of the programme had a knock on effect on the timescale for undertaking the research.
- 13.25. In addition, unforeseen difficulties in obtaining full planning permission for the implementation of St. Paul's have also led to delays in the completion of the project. This in turn reduced the duration of the evaluation.
- 13.26. This evaluation of the impact of the Play Pathfinder programme on children, their families/carers and the community was carried as soon as the case study areas were opened to the public. This short duration did not allow enough time for the programme to be embedded, and for the stakeholders to grasp the extent of the changes.
- 13.27. This research carefully selected four case study areas of the Play Pathfinder programme in Bristol. Although, it was argued that these case study areas are to a certain extent representatives of the programme, the sample may be too small to provide a representative sample of the whole Play Pathfinder programme in Bristol.
- 13.28. Children consulted in this research are generally users of the Pathfinder play areas. This research did not extend to other children who live close to the Pathfinder play areas, but may not be regular users of the play areas.
- 13.29. On average, more than fifty families and members of the community were, face-to-face, consulted about the effectiveness of the programme in each case study area. Although random sampling was used in the selection of participants, a larger sample may result in a better representation of local communities.

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Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE These are the photographs of the play spaces in the Netham Park playground. Please tick the appropriate box		
PLAY AREA	DO YOU LIKE IT?	Tell us what you think about these places
	 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
	 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
	 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
	 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
	 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	

	<p>  I like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	
	<p>  I like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	
	<p>  I like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	
	<p>  I like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	
	<p>  I like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	
	<p>  I like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/> </p>	

		 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
Free Play Green Spaces			
		 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
		 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
		 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
		 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	
		 I like it <input type="checkbox"/>  It is scary <input type="checkbox"/>  I don't like it <input type="checkbox"/>	

The observation record for the analysis of children behaviour on the playground

Appendix 2

Play area	Time	Behaviour			Conversa- tion/ Interacti on with	Double coded behaviours			
		Solitary	Parallel	Group		Anxious	Hovering	Aggressi on	Rough and tumble
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
out									

Play Observation Scale Coding Sheet

Child (no) ___ Sex _____ Age ___

Code	SEX	AGE	Play area Number	
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				

uncodable _____
 out of playground _____
 transitional _____
 unoccupied _____
 onlooker _____
Conversation/Interacting With: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____
A sample of cognitive map

Oldbury Court playground

