

Play Midlothian
Play for All

Project Report (31 March 2017)

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Aiming to increase participation and to improve quality

Play for All

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Cover image: Scribble Sheet drawn by Robbie Hamilton, Burnbrae School

1. Play for All: overview

Play for All was a new area of work on inclusive play for disabled children and young people in Midlothian. The work explored what changes could be made to ensure disabled children gain the greatest potential benefits from play through participation in local provision and accessing spaces for play.

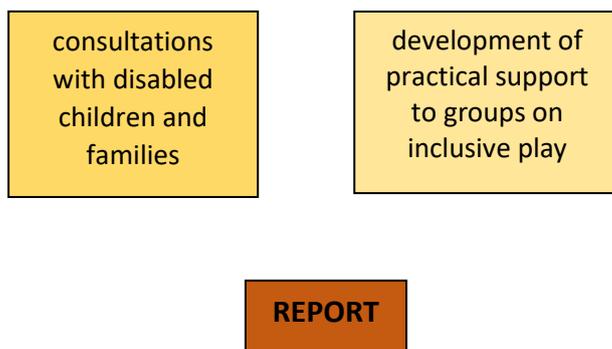
The project took place over the course of a year in which a range of consultation, engagement and support activities took place to build a clearer picture of children’s and families’ experience and to develop recommendations that can be taken up by Play Midlothian and other groups in Midlothian within their own organisations or in partnership.

In the course of the project the Midlothian Play Strategy was published which provides a strong framework for progress on inclusion through its principles and action plan. Further reference to the play strategy is made in this report to link to action already identified. Near the end of project, Bright Sparks family provision held their official opening events following their move to new premises in Bonnyrigg. Bright Sparks is seen as having a great deal of potential to support play in Midlothian. Also towards the end of the project, it became apparent that no provider had been found to deliver the holiday playscheme provision which was previously provided by Capability Scotland at Saltergate School. This was seen as a significant blow to many families for whom holidays can be a particularly challenging time without the support and routine of school.

Play for All Aims

To increase the participation of disabled children in local play provision

To improve the quality of local play provision to ensure it is providing genuinely inclusive play (meaning something more than children just being in the same place together)



to explore potential approaches to improving the situation	to feed into the development of Play Midlothian work streams	to enable communities and organisations to learn from the work and to take any actions relevant to them...	<i>... including the cross-departmental and sector Working Group responsible for Midlothian’s Play Strategy</i>
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Methods

Play for All used a variety of methods to reach parents and carers, staff and children and young people through the project. Some of these were redesigned in the course of the project to enable us to reach more participants.

- Online survey for parents/carers of, or people working with, disabled children in Midlothian
- Individual and group conversations regarding inclusive play in Midlothian
- Low-key everyday actions postcards
- Scribble Sheet method of consulting children
- Site visits to equipped play areas
- Play for All Support Sessions

Reach

Summary (See appendix 2 for more details.)

Online survey for parents/carers of, or people working with, disabled children in Midlothian	24 responses
Direct consultations with parents	9 consultations involving 23 parents
Direct consultations with staff/managers (out of school care, schools and nursery, ASN provision, family provision, Midlothian Council)	8 consultation involving 15 staff/managers
Low-key everyday actions postcards	Returned: 131 in total Children 79 Students 45 Practitioners 3 Parents 4
Scribble Sheet method of consulting children	24 completed by 33 children and young people
Site visits to equipped play areas (one of which was with a group of 8 children)	8 Involving 8 children and 8 adults
Play for All Support Sessions	26 involving 208 children and 61 adults
Total number of adults involved across all activities	183
Total number of children and young people involved across all activities	328

Limitations

At the beginning of the project some initial scoping was undertaken to find out more about play opportunities available to disabled children in Midlothian. More information was gathered as a result of the consultation and support activities. Organisations identified were included in the project.

More time than anticipated was required to make contact with parents and carers of disabled children and children themselves. The team felt that that there were likely to be a number of reasons:

Play Midlothian doesn't have direct relationship with families of disabled children so they may have been hesitant to share their personal views and experiences with an organisation they didn't know;

For the same reason, it was necessary to go through other groups to reach parents, carers and children. Some of these were already running surveys and collecting information from families so they didn't want to overload them;

Parents/carers of disabled children have a lot of calls on their time already.

Despite this when it was possible to have direct contact, parents and carers had a lot to say about the experience of play spaces and opportunities for their child and family as a whole.

Terminology

In this project, Play Midlothian has used the form of wording 'disabled children' rather than children with disabilities or children with additional support needs. Play Midlothian has used this form of wording as it is understood to recognise the social model of disability developed by disabled people, rather than the medical model of disability which locates the disability as a problem with the individual.

Briefly, within the social model to be disabled refers to the discrimination experienced by children and adults on the grounds of their impairment(s). Practices which exclude and discriminate appear as social, environmental or organisational barriers which serve to exclude certain people.

However, the 'people first' movement tends to prefer the use of phrases such as 'children with disabilities' and this is also the form used in the documents of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Convention, General Comments etc.). In this project, we have used the former however understand others will prefer other forms.

Key reference points

Casey, T (2015) *Playing with Quality and Equality*, Inclusive Play Review. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/10/1795>

Midlothian Council (2016) *Midlothian Play Strategy 2017-19*. Midlothian Council http://04ece26b646ef40c1c28183f8ca9191b6f09c54019d1f826a82b.r75.cf1.rackcdn.com/pdf_files/411/Midlothian_Play_Strategy.pdf

Scottish Government (2015) *Inclusive Play in Scotland: Context, Concepts and Current Research* Edinburgh: Scottish Government. <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/10/1795>

2. Survey findings

There were 24 respondents to the online survey. Respondents were all adults (see appendix 2) and came from 11 different locations across Midlothian including the main conurbations and more rural areas and villages. The survey asked about equipped play areas, playing at home, playing in school, early learning and childcare, playing in the local community and, more broadly, what respondents think might help make playing in Midlothian more accessible and inclusive. The survey provided a useful perspective and findings were then used as a basis for the interview format in subsequent discussions with parents and practitioners.

Amongst the children's **favourite places to play in Midlothian**, Vogrie Country Park was the most often highlighted; local parks and play areas plus staffed provision were also mentioned.

In relation to using equipped play areas (e.g. areas with swings, slides etc.) in Midlothian, respondents highlighted "**other things to play with e.g. plants, grass, trees**".

Other typical remarks in relation to what people would like to see were:

- Less 'equipment' and more engaging play areas, for example "tunnels, grassy mounds, weed dens, and loose parts"
- Sensory areas and accessible play equipment for additional support needs
- Fully accessible and inclusive parks with equipment that can be used by all.

In relation to play at home 74% and 63% of respondents respectively found the following two issues a problem or a big problem:

- It's difficult to afford the kinds of play things that my child would enjoy.
- It's difficult to find activities that all my children can enjoy together.

In relation to opportunities to play in school, early learning and childcare, 67%, 62% and 62% of respondents respectively found the following issues a problem or a big problem:

- Not enough training about inclusive play for staff.
- Not enough information and ideas available to staff about inclusive play.
- Insufficient or the wrong kind of play resources.

In relation to opportunities to play in local community, respondents found the following issues a problem or a big problem (% of respondents)

- There aren't enough good places to play for disabled children and young people in Midlothian. 95%
- Social reasons such as disabled children not being accepted by other children. 83%
- Play areas are not accessible and inclusive enough for us. 78%
- Costs (transport, entrance fees). 72%
- It's difficult for us to get to the good places to play. 66%
- My child/children need a different type of play provision from what is available in Midlothian. 65%

What do you think might help make playing in Midlothian more accessible and inclusive?

All options offered were considered helpful or very helpful. The following were considered very helpful by more than 50% of respondents or more

- Improve disabled children's access to outdoor spaces including natural spaces and country parks. 78%
- Provide guidance on adventurous play, and risk and challenge in play for disabled children. 64%
- Ensure all provision and activities supporting play are expected to be inclusive. 62%
- Increase coordination across Midlothian to increase inclusion more widely. 60%
- Offer training on more inclusive approaches for play to people working with children. 56%

Note

Respondents were given the option of providing details to join the Play Midlothian mailing list which eight took up. This will help to ensure information about Play Midlothian activities reaches more parents of disabled children.

Discussion

Findings from the survey were discussed further in conversations with parents and carers and staff at Burnbrae School, Bright Sparks family provision and at two sessions opened after an open call. The discussions reinforced the findings but also illustrated that there is not a 'one size fits all' solution.

Places to play

Vogrie Park was again highlighted as a favourite place however for some children it was noted that their opportunities tended to be limited to going for walks (being taken for a walk in their wheelchair) and activities facilitated by adults.

Some parents really highlighted the diverse natural environments available in Midlothian (such as Vogrie, Dalkeith, Roslin Glen etc.) but there was a feeling that some families of disabled children lacked confidence to use them and perhaps ideas about what to do there. More support to use more diverse spaces for play would be welcome.

Places such as soft play centres and Ryze were mentioned though there were mixed experiences of how helpful staff and other parents were in enabling an inclusive experience. For some children, soft play can be tricky as there isn't much space for moving around inside the apparatus.

Staff attitudes and lack of knowledge in some play provider settings can impact upon play – they can be restricting with their requirements or just not have realistic expectations for that child. More training or awareness raising for staff based at soft play and other services would allow them to develop an understanding so that the parent/carers don't have to explain each time when they attend.

Disappointment was expressed that in the redeveloped adventure play area at Dalkeith Country Park access for disabled children is not as good as it could have been, especially for children using wheelchairs and there are also issues for children with other additional needs.

Services such as Bright Sparks, Saltersgate Playscheme, The Action Group and LASC were seen as highly valuable to the families, encouraging children's independence and broadening their experience and social circles.

Having access to a car to access places such as Vogrie Park or The Yard in Edinburgh makes a big difference in Midlothian. Lack of a car was especially limiting for families for whom public transport caused their children great difficulty. Vogrie Park is not accessible by public transport.

Many of the families go to The Yard despite the distance into Edinburgh. They would like to see a play space in Midlothian with the same kind of adventurous play, loose parts, and sensory environment which the Yard has and the skilled playworkers on hand to support the children's play.

"I think there is a need for a separate play area specifically aimed (although accepting of mainstream children) for children with additional needs. A safe place where they will always be accepted and parents don't need to feel the social stresses of visiting existing play areas."

Older children and families with more than one child

It was highlighted that finding places and opportunities for older children can become more difficult - more services are perceived to be available to younger children.

Families and school ASN provisions are looking for equipped play areas that meet the needs of physically bigger children and older children as the way they play may be at an earlier stage than their chronological age but the equipment doesn't support that.

When children need 1:1 support it is sometimes the parent/carer who is expected to provide that however this isn't always possible especially when there are other children in the family.

Uncertainty over funding, lack of provision, not enough funding etc. all impact on families' sense of confidence in the experience their child can expect.

Opportunities to play at home and in the family (going out as a family)

At the very beginning (before or during diagnosis) parents felt it would have been good to have someone to share ideas for engaging in play with their child

"I felt lost during this time and I found it hard to offer play for my child."

Organised play opportunities would also be appreciated either indoors or out and practitioner-led opportunities out in the community such as outdoor play/walks etc. Ideally these should be somewhere with good transport links / transport offered and suitable changing facilities.

This would help with the isolation experienced by parents/carers of disabled children.

A parent/carer taking their child out would often like to have someone with them to provide informal, friendly support and an extra pair of eyes. This would help them to get out more by helping them get ready, get to places to play and to assist while there. This is especially helpful for families with more than one child, with a child who needs a lot of close care and attention. It would also really boost the confidence of parents who feel they are met by judgemental attitudes when out and about with their child.

Feeling judged, people staring and unhelpful remarks and behaviour from other adults are a big barrier leading to an unpleasant experience for families.

Some families end up avoiding going out at all as it is so exhausting or because they are met with such negative attitudes when they are out.

Opportunities to play at school, early learning and childcare

In general, it seems to be difficult to find out what is available, from whom, where services are, and where good play spaces are. This echoes findings of the Midlothian Play Strategy background work. The development of a parent network would be helpful – sharing information, lobbying for change and improvement, and providing social and emotional support. All of this would help to reduce the isolation experienced by parents and carers of disabled children.

Many groups for parents and carers are held through the week during working hours which can make it difficult for working parents to attend/access things.

One parent was very frustrated that she was allocated more respite hours during term time than holiday time. Around six hours' respite was going to waste during term time but when she approached the council to have this reversed to more hours during holiday time, her request was denied.

There seemed to be a low awareness of Play Midlothian amongst the parents and carers spoken to – Play Midlothian might wish to look at areas of their communication plans that could be improved to reach parents of disabled children.

New housing

A great deal of new housing has been built or is being built in many areas of Midlothian, some of these very large schemes which amount to new communities. Concern was expressed about the lack of facilities and sense of community which leads to isolation and children not being allowed out to play and to walk to school on their own. Play spaces were regarded as an afterthought or poorly situated or maintained for the convenience of factors rather than residents.



Vogrie Country Park, play area, March 2017

3. Play for All Postcards – low-key, everyday actions for inclusion

Sets of postcards along with a poster and postcard-collection box were distributed through nine settings (and went further to associated settings) in Midlothian. (See appendix 1)

The idea was to collect examples of good practice related to inclusive play opportunities in Midlothian, so that these ideas can be shared and used. We were particularly keen to collect ‘low-key, every day actions’ that make a difference to children and their families. These are the small things children or adults do, that may not seem new or enormous, but really build a sense of inclusion. This idea linked with the Playing with Quality and Equality Review of Inclusive Play in Scotland (2015).

Ideas/examples were sought from parents/carers, practitioners, children and visitors and could relate to what happens before or after sessions, during settling in periods, problem solving, playing indoors, outdoors or out and about.

131 postcards were filled in by children, students, practitioners and parents.

The main themes were:

- Communication, listening, smiling
- Relationships, friendship, helping each other, taking an interest in other people
- Adapting and creating spaces for play

A handout has been created from the Postcards Project as an output from the project to help share ideas between practitioners in Midlothian.

Some examples from the postcards



“Things that make me feel included are friends, games, doing art and clay”

“I help my friends when they fall over”

“I help comfort my friends when they are sad or upset”

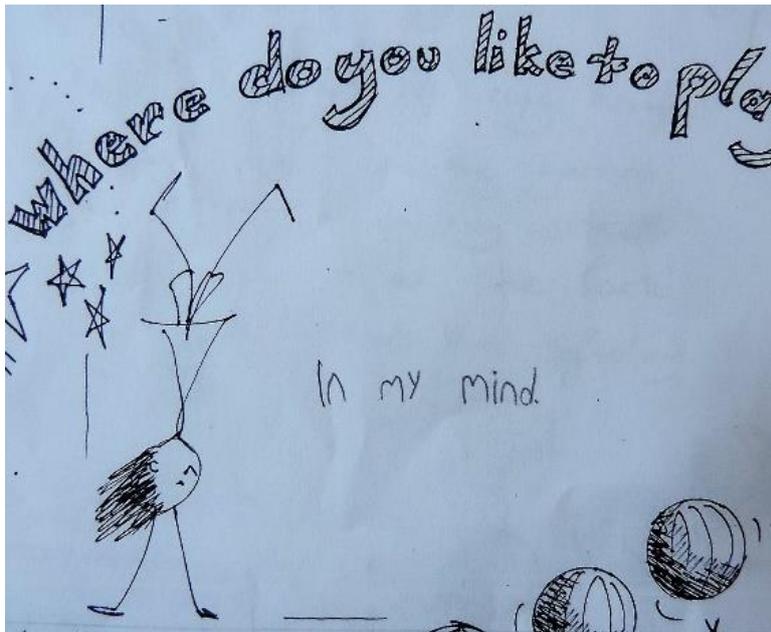
“New child sitting on bench at playtime – I went over and introduced myself and some other kids asked her if she liked playing games. She ended up leading games by teaching the p1’s her favourite one.”

“A parent brought his daughter to nursery. He told me all about his studies. I had mentioned in passing that I was at college. Next time he came in (over a week later) he asked me how I was enjoying my college course. I was very happy he took an interest and remembered. Staff also need to feel included!”

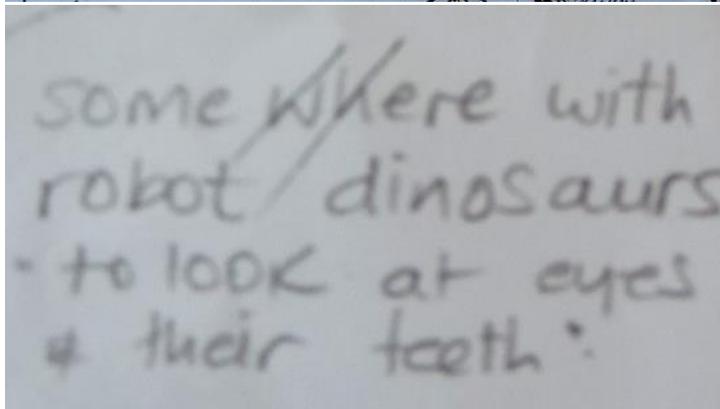
“I can’t thank the staff enough for helping me through a difficult time after just having my second child. My child’s speech was a problem however the playgroup made sure they had lots of suitable toys available and visual aids to ensure he didn’t feel any different.”

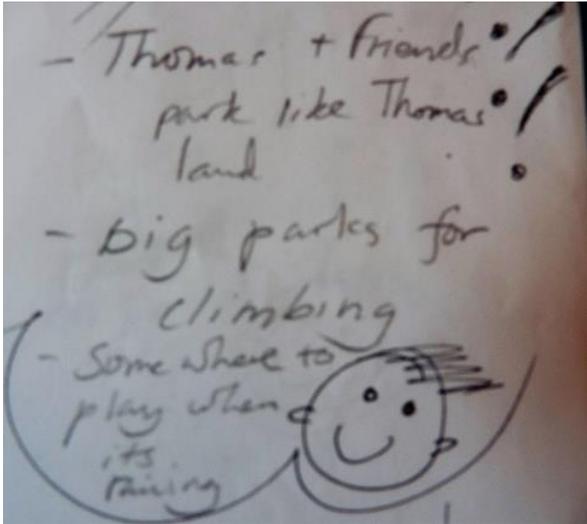
4. Play for All Scribble Sheets

The Scribble Sheet method was used to gather views from children and young people and to support conversations about play. This method, like the postcards, was useful when we were gathering information indirectly from children. 24 sheets were returned, involving 33 children. Some of the sheets were completed collaboratively by several children, others by children with adult support and some by individual children. The comments below reflect the feedback on the Scribble Sheets.



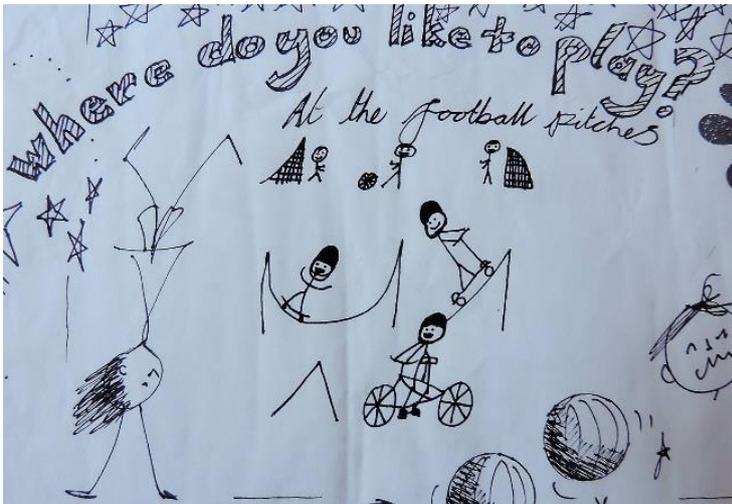
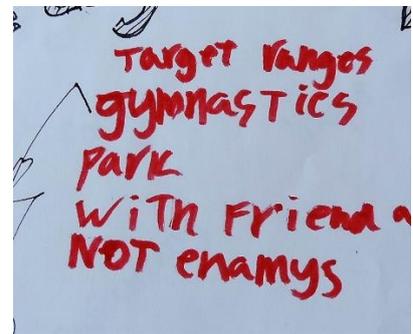
Children like to play in lots of different places including parks, play areas, at home and in gardens, swimming pools and leisure centres. They like to do lots of different things from playing on Xboxes to gymnastics, gokarting, and playing with friends.





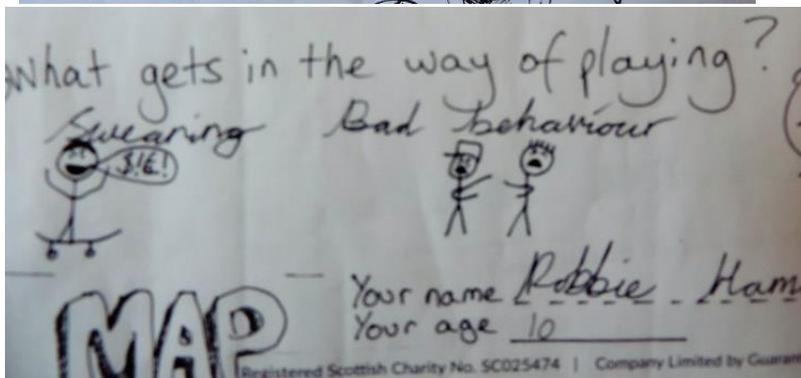
Some of the things that get in the way of playing include play areas that have broken equipment, are not clean or there is dog poo. Some just need to be more fun.

Children don't always feel safe because of what other people and older children are doing. They don't like swearing and bad behaviour. Some children would like places that are quieter and less busy.



What gets in the way of playing?

"If you are me, nothing."



5. Site visits

Site visits were made to a variety of local and town parks and Vogrie Country Park to gain a clearer and reasonably objective impression of accessibility and inclusive features. These site visits were undertaken towards the end of the project, so it was possible to look out for features that parents, carers, staff and children had spoken about in the survey and consultation activities. There is no standard set of ‘inclusion’ indicators. The following set was derived from: Inclusive Play Space Guide – championing better and more inclusive play spaces in Hong Kong (Playright Child’s Play Association & UNICEF, 2016)

Examples and ideas that parents/carers, staff and children suggested they would like to see are in blue italics as illustrations.

Inclusive elements considered during site visits

<p>1. Inviting, welcoming and stimulating</p> <p><i>It can be hard to find things for all the children in the family as they have different needs.</i></p> <p><i>Cleaned regularly.</i></p> <p><i>Some well thought out pathways around the park would be good – “my son loves to follow paths but he also likes to watch from the edge as being in the middle of the park can be too much for him”.</i></p>	<p>2. Diversity and choice i.e. variety of play experiences</p> <p><i>More for younger kids and also for older (i.e. over 10, zip line etc.)</i></p> <p><i>Sensory areas and accessible play equipment.</i></p>	<p>3. Possibilities for interaction with nature</p> <p><i>Digging patch, sand pit, dens etc.</i></p> <p><i>Lavender and herbs to touch and smell.</i></p>
<p>4. Connectedness to homes, public transport, walking/ cycling path network</p>	<p>5. Accessible compacted or sealed paths to and within a play space; accessible and creative use of surfacing</p> <p><i>No bark/woodchip as playground flooring – you cannot push a buggy or wheelchair over it.</i></p>	<p>6. Natural shade and trees</p> <p><i>Contrasting light and dark from the trees and sky.</i></p>
<p>7. Custom-made or individualised equipment</p> <p><i>Safer equipment for ASN children to be more independent on.</i></p> <p><i>Equipment that's "easier" to play on.</i></p>	<p>8. Sense of place created by artwork and sculptures</p> <p><i>Water jets that come out of the pavement – random heights and directions.</i></p>	<p>9. Physical play experiences</p> <p><i>More natural and simple play areas would help as they create their own games so highlight the differences between the kids less than pre-designed equipment.</i></p> <p><i>Children using wheelchairs loved the bumping (over rough ground).</i></p>

<p>10. Sensory play experiences</p> <p><i>Sensory areas</i></p> <p><i>Planting with scents such as lavender.</i></p> <p><i>Things that spin.</i></p>	<p>11. Social play experiences</p> <p><i>Places for the whole family (children of different ages).</i></p>	<p>12. Incorporates multiple levels, intimate spaces, creative entry and exit points and imaginative interiors</p> <p><i>Less 'equipment' and more engaging play areas, for example tunnels, grassy mounds, wee dens, and loose parts.</i></p> <p><i>Quiet spaces – huts or spaces for children who want to watch for a bit.</i></p> <p><i>Natural fencing – using plants, bushes to create fencing in play parks (sense of security).</i></p>	
<p>13. Incorporates natural materials, indigenous vegetation and pre-existing landforms</p> <p><i>More natural things like giant pieces of wood to climb on and go through.</i></p>	<p>14. Universally accessible play spaces which incorporate items such as, sand boxes raised to table height, swings with high backs, etc.</p> <p><i>A flying fox that you can be strapped to if you aren't great at holding on!</i></p> <p><i>Nest swings, accessible slides, wheelchair roundabout.</i></p>		<p>15. Incorporates opportunities for risk and challenge</p> <p><i>Things to climb on.</i></p>
<p>16. Opportunities for ball games and running games</p>	<p>17. Sand areas and playable water features</p> <p><i>Like at The Yard.</i></p>	<p>18. Incorporates play opportunities for very young children</p>	
<p>19. Incorporates activities and social spaces for young adults</p> <p><i>Maybe having play sessions purely for disabled children and their siblings. That way every parent there understands and hopefully makes everyone feel more comfortable and able to enjoy the experience.</i></p>		<p>20. Provides supporting amenities, e.g. shaded seating, drinking fountain, litter bin, family toilet and designated car parking (Note: see Changing Places Toilets)</p> <p><i>More seating for parents, bins and a sheltered area for picnics.</i></p> <p><i>No dogs rule enforced / Fences to keep dogs out.</i></p> <p><i>Having tables that are used for play or snack at a height that a child in a wheelchair can sit at and play beside their peers.</i></p>	

Key findings

- Play areas would be better if sensory elements were designed in.
- Standard even inclusive play equipment cannot meet the needs of all children.
- It's important to think about inclusive play spaces in terms of distribution across Midlothian and how people will access them.
- The need for public toilets, changing and other facilities.

Play areas would be better if sensory elements were designed in

This was expressed through every stage of the consultation activities. All children would benefit from the sensory qualities of a play area being considered both in terms of minimising negative qualities (areas exposed to wind etc.) and maximising positive playful qualities the sensory environment can bring.

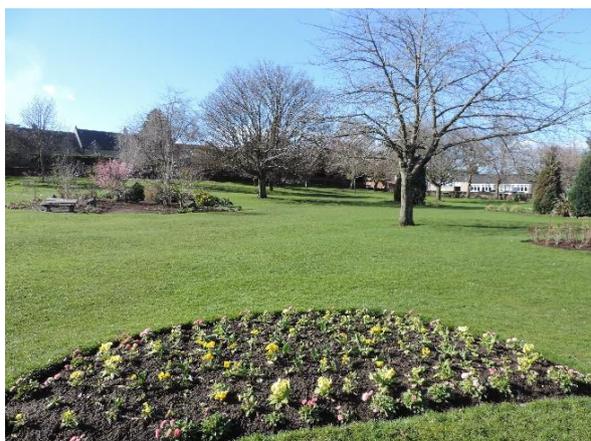
Generally, people were particularly keen that the sensory environment be enhanced through natural features and landscaping so that these are fully integrated in design. Scented plants alongside paths, long grasses creating nooks and crannies, shelter provided by shrubs, visual changes throughout the seasons, and sparkling water, are all simple examples. Sensory experiences can also be provided by light and shade, looking up through the canopy of trees to the sky, and touchable textures. They can be provided by coloured panels casting colourful shadows onto the ground or onto people, things that spin or move in the wind, and bumpy paths. The addition of loose parts play through natural materials on the play area (such as large sand play areas) or through activities provided by play workers, would also be opportunities to increase sensory qualities.



Many of the equipped play areas have planting, shrubs, trees etc. within the same park but these are not integrated with the play areas and generally not intended for play.

This means that children seeking these out will be separated from children playing on equipment or simply not allowed.

Some play areas are surrounded by interesting planting and landscape which is effectively fenced out of the play area.



Kings Park, Dalkeith (top and above)

Arniston Vale (above)

Standard or even inclusive play equipment cannot meet the needs of all children

How children want to play is not determined by their age or their physical size. There is a strong view that many children, particularly with learning disabilities, need bigger more robust equipment to swing and climb on or to stimulate creative and imaginative play but that these are sometimes confined to play equipment designed for younger children.

Equipment that was less prescriptive in terms of how it was played with and the visual message about age-appropriateness would be helpful. Again, use of natural materials and landscaping integrated into play areas was seen as a desirable way to cater for children's varying play needs and preferences.

It's important to think about inclusive play spaces in terms of distribution across Midlothian and how people will access them

It's clear from talking to parents, carers and staff that, because of all the variations in age, stage, ability, preference etc., one play area is not going to meet the needs of every child. People are pleased to see more inclusive equipment such as accessible roundabouts, different types of swing and small rockers with backs in a number of Midlothian play areas. It might be possible to identify key features that should be common to every play area to enhance these settings such as:

- Sensory features integrated into the play area design
- More use of inclusive equipment
- Careful use of surfaces to meet both access and play needs.

It is not reasonable to assume that every play area will be able to cater for every single child in exactly the way they choose, however it is reasonable to aim for a position where disabled children and their families have choices that meet their needs within reasonable distance for regular play.

Mapping the distribution of areas which provide different types of experience is very important. This mapping could indicate not just types of play experience but other key elements such as:

- Accessible toilets
- Parking
- Public transport

Mapping could be used to fill information gaps but also to actively ensure more inclusive opportunities across Midlothian.

The need for public toilets, changing and other facilities

There are many children for whom lack of accessible toilets and toilets to the standard of Changing Places, which have more space and the right equipment, including a height adjustable changing bench and a hoist, is a significant barrier to play. Some children (and adults) cannot use standard accessible toilets. This includes people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, as well as older people. <http://www.changing-places.org/>

Changing Places toilets enable people to get out and about and enjoy the day-to-day activities. According to the Changing Places toilet map only Ikea at Straiton and Dalkeith Library and Arts Centre are registered Changing Places facilities.

Toilet Information can be found at: <http://www.uktoiletmap.org/find?toiletLocation=Midlothian>

6. Support to settings

In total eight different settings received support sessions as part of the Play for All project. The type and amount of support provided varied depending on what the group felt they needed. A total of 26 support sessions were provided.

The types of settings involved varied and included after school clubs, provision specifically for disabled children, a playgroup, family support services, a resource centre for Midlothian practitioners and primary schools. The age ranges in settings included early years, primary school, teenagers and mixed age groups. (See appendix 2.)

A description of types of support and observations about the benefits of these are provided to inform the design of future projects.

Type of support provided

Informal visits including advice, guidance and information sharing

The informal visits proved to be one of the most effective ways to provide support to settings. Quite often the visits would happen when the children were in attendance so advice and suggestions could reflect what was happening within the setting at that time. One setting identified that they often fall into a habit of doing the same 'stuff' day after day and felt 'stuck' when it came to thinking up new ways of working with children. They enjoyed having the opportunity to have someone come into their setting to offer advice and guidance on how they could enhance or develop their provision to make it more inclusive and responsive to the children and families that they provide for.

- Practitioners appeared comfortable meeting this way as the focus wasn't always directly on what they were saying.
- They could illustrate their points with real life examples within the setting.
- Using the informal visits provided a way to gather information about each setting and what they were providing, allowing support to be tailored to their needs.
- The informal visits were also a good way to collect ideas and good practice to share with other settings.
- Informal visits provided an opportunity to respond to various issues or queries there and then. This allowed quick and meaningful responses for the settings allowing them to act on the information almost straight away.
- Reassurance could be provided that they were doing a good job, helping to build confidence in their own practice.
- Offering advice and ideas helped staff feel enthused and inspired to make changes or try out new ideas.

Example of action as a result of advice during informal visits – play space audit

One organisation decided to assess the play rooms and activities provided for the children and to identify what was needed within their audit which was specific to meeting the needs of disabled children.

Example of action as a result of advice during informal visits - sourcing and sharing information

Sourcing and sharing information also happened as a follow up to visits for certain issues and concerns. This was then sent back to the practitioners either via email or face to face. It would also happen in an impromptu manner after having been on informal visits to the different providers, which gave a picture of what information might be relevant for each. It could be instantly shared.

Practical examples (sharing of practice)

Through the support sessions, a knowledge of practical examples of activities and good practice in Midlothian was developed. These examples could be shared directly during the support sessions with other practitioners, however it was also decided that a few of those examples could be translated into case studies which could form part of the Play for All final project work. It is anticipated that these can be shared across settings to encourage others to reflect upon their practice and develop it in a way that will make it more inclusive or may even encourage others to share their ideas etc. too. (See appendix 1.)

Team building session (inclusion)

A team building session was developed for one of the settings. The aim of this session was to explore 'play' and 'inclusion' and what this meant for the staff team. This session was created using practical examples (scenarios) from each of the related settings and these were used by the practitioners to reflect on and provide suggestions, identify issues etc.

- The activity enabled those who were working with the specific scenario to try out new ideas and suggestions to improve the child's experience within the ASC.
- This session helped to explore some of the hidden attitudes and ideas that practitioners held about inclusion.
- It allowed the whole staff team to come to a shared understanding of what it meant for them.
- This shared understanding will allow the practitioners to take a consistent approach in their care and provision for disabled children.

Development of resources

One of the main requests from settings was about the development of resources that can be used to promote and encourage inclusive play. In addition to this, staff from all settings have said that they rarely get the opportunity to chat with and share ideas with those from other settings. To meet both needs it was decided to develop an Inclusive Play – Resource Making Workshop. Practitioners from various settings could come together with other practitioners to make their own play resources. It will be possible for Play Midlothian to re-use the course content to run it again in the future. Each participant will be provided with information handouts and will have the opportunity to take away the resource they make and use it within their setting.

Support in the playground

Direct support to look at the playground was provided to promote and develop the provision of play for all children. This involved working in partnership with the school staff team (playground assistants, learning assistants and management team) as well as working with the children themselves. The staff and children shared their thoughts and feelings of play and the playground and explored ways in which play could be supported and developed. This was done using a solution based approach in which concerns/issues were identified along with ways that these could also be addressed and/or developed. The children were involved in a playground activity (consultation) which encouraged them to look at their play within their playground (both what they play and where) and to also think about ways in which play could be made better in the playground. This provided a basis from which to draw up an action plan for the school to follow to enhance and develop the space and experiences for all children. The staff team was brought together to develop a shared understanding and commitment to the work they do within the playground and how important this is to the experiences of the children.

Key areas of work

- Involvement of children in the development of their space
- Consultation including children helping with the consultation process (some took an active part in helping to gather thoughts etc.)
- The possible formation of a Pupil Voice group to lead the playground development, with the support from staff
- Children possibly taking the lead in activities which they identified
- Exploring and identifying issues/solutions with staff
- Bringing the team together to discuss issues/concerns
- Developing a shared understanding of play, its provision and importance in the playground
- Developing a plan of action to enhance and develop the provision of play in the playground (not only looking at resources/equipment but the development of supportive attitudes and a stimulating environment)
- Encouraging the adults to work in a mutual/equal partnership with children in the development of the play space.

7. Recommendations to increase participation and to improve quality

The Midlothian Play Strategy strongly supports inclusive approaches and includes a specific theme, Play for All, which aims to:

- provide access to play spaces and opportunities that are suitable for all children
- ensure families across Midlothian have the support they need to give their children access to suitable play opportunities
- increase the capacity of professionals across Midlothian to support children to access suitable play opportunities.

The recommendations that follow are intended to support ideas for achievable actions not only by Play Midlothian but by other partners to the Play Strategy.

- many of the recommendations are inter-related, for example, the experience of using play areas could be improved by better design and support to parents
- some of the recommendations would lend themselves to partnership approaches, for example, bringing play expertise into support for families
- some recommendations might usefully be brought together in a role or roles for an inclusive play development worker within Play Midlothian, for example, developing pilots and new schemes, testing ideas, managing a volunteer activity, supporting partnerships, and sharing good practice.

1. Spaces to play

Consider how approaches to designing equipped play areas could take into account:

- play areas would be better if sensory elements were designed in
- standard or even inclusive play equipment cannot meet the needs of all children
- it's important to think about inclusive play spaces in terms of distribution across Midlothian and how people will access them
- toilets, changing and other facilities
- the need for suitable play areas and equipment for older children with ASNs.

Consideration should be given to:

- how planting schemes can be more successfully integrated into the design and layout of equipped play areas
- whether partnership approaches might enable more integrated planting schemes within play areas, for example, could support be sought from 'Friends of' groups, gardening groups or other unpaid work or volunteer schemes?
- how sensory features can be integrated into play areas through such elements as loose materials, bespoke equipment and structures, playable artwork, imaginative use of off-the-shelf sensory play equipment and design schemes that integrate these effectively
- how the expertise of groups such as Play Midlothian could assist at refurbishment or design stages of equipped play areas and parks

- how introduction of playworkers and other practitioner-led activities could complement or enhance the opportunities offered by equipped play areas
- whether framing these activities as evaluated pilots might be an effective approach to assist with gaining funding, partners and learning opportunities
- introduction of Changing Places facilities elsewhere in Midlothian located in existing facilities near popular play areas. (This action might usefully involve local elected members.)
- whether Yard-style inclusive adventure play opportunities featuring playworkers, loose parts etc. can be made more available in settings and locations in Midlothian
- whether the outdoor space at Bright Sparks might be developed further to help to meet this need for inclusive adventure and loose parts play and how that could be achieved.

2. Information - parents and carers

There seemed to be a low awareness of Play Midlothian amongst the parents and carers of disabled children.

Play Midlothian should increase contact with families of disabled children by:

- identifying areas of its communication plans that could be improved to reach parents of disabled children
- increasing the number of families with disabled children on mailing lists, Facebook page etc.
- ensuring there is relevant information for these families on the website and Facebook etc.

Mapping of play spaces and opportunities should be undertaken to investigate:

- what is available to and useable by disabled children and their families
- the best way to reach families of disabled children with information about equipped play areas, staffed and unstaffed opportunities
- key partners in collating and sharing information
- what information would be most useful and in what format(s)
- how to keep information up-to-date and relevant.

3. Support to parents and carers

Support for play is a need which crosses over with other support needs of families of disabled children both in terms of how to ensure access to play and how play can contribute to happier, healthier experiences for the family.

Points parents/carers and staff highlighted in relation to meeting the need for support:

- more support to use more diverse spaces for play
- someone to accompany and provide informal, friendly support and an extra pair of eyes on visits to play areas and play spaces such as woodlands and country parks
- someone to share ideas with parents for engaging in play with their child at different stages e.g. at the very beginning (before or during diagnosis) and as children grow older.
- practitioner-led opportunities out in the community– outdoor play, play walks etc.
- the development of a parent network – sharing information, lobbying etc.
- parent groups held at times that are also suitable for working parents

- befriending or one-to-one support that is available to children as they grow older (some services are only provided to families with very young children).

Support to families should consider:

- partnership with family support services – increasing play input or extending to families with older children
- how relevant partners in Midlothian can work together to ensure suitable play-based provision all year round but particularly in school holidays when need for support can be especially high.

4. Transport

Travelling to play areas that are suitable can be an issue for people who rely on public transport.

Points to consider:

- information about transport included in information actions (as above)
- public transport to Vogrie Park
- transport considered in support to families (as above).

5. Support to practitioners and settings

The support to settings work carried out as part of this project identified a range of needs that could be met, useful approaches to providing support and ways in which learning could be shared or enhanced in order to meet need for greater sharing of expertise across Midlothian.

Needs in schools in relation to inclusive play opportunities were identified as:

- improved design of outdoor play environments
- introduction of loose parts play
- training for staff and team building in relation to play and play times
- development of activities in schools for children and parents that enhance their role as community hubs and support environments for inclusive opportunities
- pilot scheme for inclusive play in school grounds (in and out of school hours).

Support to practitioners points to consider:

- Play Midlothian to seek funding for a member of staff to design, deliver and manage support to practitioners focussing on inclusion
- continue with model of in-setting hands-on support and advice
- use this to identify further training and resources that can be developed on a rolling basis (such as the resources workshop, information sharing).

6. New housing

Play has an important role in building a sense of connectedness and belonging as well as enhancing the general sense of communities being friendly and appealing. Lack of consideration of play needs in terms of space and facilities for children of different ages, stages and abilities mitigates against this and has quite profound effects.

In relation to areas of new housing, consider:

- where support can be given to develop play opportunities e.g. through Parent Councils in local schools, residents' associations etc.
- the type of support that might be useful – e.g. community play days, play rangers, creation of environments for increased biodiversity on 'green deserts' etc.
- where support can be given to the need for youth facilities (e.g. which partnerships need to be involved)
- follow up with Ian Grey MSP on his request for the Minister for Children to contact the Minister for Housing regarding the negative effect factoring arrangements can have on play in newbuild estates.

Appendix 1. Case studies

In the course of the Play for All support activities, many good examples of inclusive practice were found. The case studies that follow were written by the settings and illustrate a number of dimensions to supporting inclusion. One of the findings of the Play for All project is that practitioners and settings are looking for more ways to share good practice examples on an ongoing basis.

Development of Parents' Group - Burnbrae Provision

I was very aware how isolating it can be at times for the parents with children with ASD. I set up a Parents' Group within the school in order for the parents to meet up and form a support network for each other. The group, which meets up monthly, has proved to be very popular for the parents who enjoy the opportunity to share ideas and advice with others who really understand how it feels, as well as being able to talk about the difficulties around raising a child with ASD. Due to sensory integration difficulties, everyday daily living skills such as having hair and nails cut, teeth cleaned and bathing were some of the problems shared amongst the group. Talking to the parents I was able to identify specific areas of concern for them all and invited agencies including Sleep Scotland and Barnardos to come and speak informally to the group. The school's Speech and Language therapists also provided workshops on Social Stories and Emotions Talk. The group also met outside the school to have a look round Bright Sparks, and just to enjoy a social chat and coffee at a local garden centre.

Disability Champion - Woman's Aid East and Midlothian

I am a Family Support Worker working for Women's Aid East and Midlothian. Within our setting, we have champions in place to ensure we are making it possible for everyone to access our service fairly and easily. I am the Children and Young People's Disability Champion. Each year I complete an audit which looks at each site area to ensure that: it is accessible for children and young people with disabilities, we have suitable resources to use within sessions and within accommodation, that I am providing information for parents who are accessing the service with children who have additional support needs (ASN) and that information is provided to them on groups, summer outing etc. I also look at suitable training that can be undertaken by staff to build knowledge on ASN. This year I focused on room layouts, providing a homely calming environment and I am currently working on a proposal to be able to adapt the spaces we have to make them more relaxing and calming for children who are experiencing trauma and children with ASN. Working with Stacey has given me great ideas and inspiration on ways that these spaces could be adapted and improved. Stacey has also given me contacts that may be able to help with the transformation.

Transition into Service (Working in partnership with Saltersgate School)

LASC Saturday Provision and Paradykes Campus

We have a number of children who attend our setting from Saltersgate School. We invite the parents and carers to come in for a look around our setting to see what is on offer and to get an insight into the child's additional support needs and how we can accommodate these. We also have the opportunity to visit the children in their classes at Saltersgate. This visit enables us to have a chat with the class teacher on behaviours, activities the children like to do and gives us insight on how they deal with the child so we can all be dealing with the child in the same way. This visit also enables us to visit the child in a setting they are comfortable with and for them to get to know a couple of faces from our after school club. It gives the staff the opportunity to introduce themselves to the child and helps with the settling in process so when they attend our club for the first time it means they have a face they recognise.

Saturday Provision Trips:

For some of the children Saturday is a long day so we decided to split the day up. Having lots of different trips means that the children can enjoy a variety of activities whether this be going on a nature walk or ten pin bowling. The children enjoy going on these outings which are beneficial to them getting out and exploring different areas and it breaks the day up for them rather than being in one setting all day. Some of the children need some gentle persuasion but when on the trip enjoy themselves. These trips are good for the children to mix with one another, build on gross motor skills and get some exercise.

Provision of Assistant to Support Children - Bonnyrigg After School Club

We have begun to introduce GIRFEC log books into our setting and we feel that we are gaining as much information about our children as we can achieve. However, with our children with additional support needs, we need additional information so we can gain more individual insight into these children's needs. We have achieved this through individual care plans which help us as a staff team to get to know how best to work with a child who has additional support needs.

In addition to this we have an additional needs worker who is based within our organisation. This person is on hand for identified children when they need extra support. That worker does not need to be with the child every day but can be near hand if the child needs them.

Development of a Children's Plan with Parents (Developing Trust and Forming Relationships) The Crescent Playgroup

For children attending a playgroup setting it may be their first time away from their parents therefore it is important for the setting to make sure the environment is inviting from a child's perspective. The setting should be set out in a way that children can navigate from activity to activity with confidence and overall provide a fun place to be. For some children, this may be very overwhelming. For children with disabilities this could prove even more overwhelming.

In the first instance, accessing the setting is key. At the playgroup, we can offer access to our building for children with wheelchairs through the main entrance and access to the garden with paths that allow children to engage in outdoor play. There is enough space left between activities to allow inclusion.

Some parents also find it quite daunting that their child is alone at playgroup without them for the first time. This is an area we work on with the parents, initially by asking parents to sit with their child and asking their likes and dislikes. From the playgroup's perspective, knowing who their family are, do they have any special pets, are there any books they enjoy, their favourite colours, shapes and toys, is important. Building up a picture of a child's comforts are important to make sure they are put at ease.

Should any child have a medical issue we work with the parents to form a care plan. This can be anything from a robust settling in process to avoid anxiety for a child leaving parents and carers for the first time, to more complex needs. Having both parties agree a plan not only supports parents in building confidence in the setting but also reassures the child that, should they need help, staff are able to provide that support. A couple of our children who currently have some complex needs at any time could need the support of the emergency services. We have built into the plan additional contact details should the need arise. Another of our children has been diagnosed with autism and for many children with autism, routine is paramount. Within their care plan their key worker facilitates this through building up trust and a bond with this child so that when they arrive at playgroup the same person supports them. We have also provided the child with visual displays to ensure they can recognise areas and carry on with playing without feeling excluded.

Development of Outdoor Area – LASC, Roslin Campus

We are located just outside of Roslin Primary School in the Pavilion which has a large open space outside with a public play park.

In our setting our aim is for the children to have access to the outside world as much as possible. Children play best when adults are watchful, but not intrusive and when safe ground lends courage to their discoveries and adventures.

With this in mind the children at Roslin have been trying out a range of different play types outside, they have also made their own props from resources which has enabled them to be creative and imaginative with their thoughts.

In the past, the children who attend the after school club have had equal access to local play and opportunities to take risks and overcome obstacles, i.e. barriers (lack of accessible play) as well as discriminating attitudes and the increasing fear for their children's safety. Inclusive play is not just about inclusion it also is important to provide high quality play opportunities to children regardless of their needs and abilities.

After consultation with our children and staff we have decided to introduce our own garden project which will enable children to be creative, test out new knowledge, make their own decisions, and build relationships and play with others.

We are hoping to create our own sensory area which will enable children to get stuck in and explore different elements. We will introduce a digging area as this has proved very popular in the past and can help with calming down a frustrated child after a long day at school. Here are some other senses-based ideas that came to mind:

- smell based opportunities such as essential oils and food flavourings like peppermint or lemon
- fresh herbs, or dried herbs
- bottled water, petals and natural materials such as leaves.

We are also hoping to source tarpaulins and introduce fancy fabrics for dens from the trees.

Appendix 2. Summary of activities undertaken

Total number of adults involved across all activities	183
Total number of children and young people involved across all activities	328

1. Online survey for parents/carers of, or people working with, disabled children in Midlothian

Breakdown of respondents:

- | | |
|--|----|
| • a parent/carer of a disabled child or young person | 13 |
| • works with disabled children and young people | 10 |
| • doesn't work directly with disabled children and young people but their work has an impact on them | 1 |
| • is a disabled person | 1 |

Total 24 responses

2. Individual and group consultations regarding inclusive play in Midlothian

- 2 x school session with parents (school with ASN provision)
- 2 x school sessions with senior staff acting
- 2 x individual discussions with managers of out of school care provision
- 1 x discussion with Out of School Care Managers Network meeting
- 1 x discussion with Land and Countryside Manager
- 1 x session with family provision –coordinator and committee chair
- 7 x discussions with parents of disabled children at family provision
- 1 x discussion with nursery/daycare manager

38 people were consulted in total through these (23 parents and carers and 15 staff and managers)

NB: additional discussions were held through the support to provision sessions

3. Low-key everyday actions postcards

Postcard packs were distributed to:

- Facilitated session with seven groups of Edinburgh College students
- LASC
- Bonnyrigg After School Club
- Midlothian Woman's Aid
- Newtongrange After School Club
- Playbase
- The Crescent Playgroup
- Burnbrae Primary School
- Childcare Partnership Office

Total 131 completed postcards were collected, as follows:

Children:79 Practitioners: 3
Students: 45 Parents: 4

4. Scribble Sheet method of consulting children

Distributed to:

- Action Group (Cherry Road)
- LASC Saturday ASN provision
- Bright Sparks
- Burnbrae School

Total 24 Scribble Sheets were returned involving 33 children and young people

5. Site visits to equipped play areas

- Accompanied group from LASC Saturday ASN provision on visit to Meadows Play Area in Edinburgh; facilitated discussion with staff and children and observation of suitability and gaps in play opportunities for the children.
- Site visits using sets of inclusive indicators:
 - Vogrie Country Park
 - Kings Park, Dalkeith – town park
 - Kings Park, Bonnyrigg – town park
 - Arniston Vale, Gorebridge – local park next to school
 - Arniston Park, Gorebridge – local park
 - Langlaw, Mayfield – local park in housing estate
 - Cousland, Cousland village.

6. Play for All Support Sessions

Support sessions provided were as follows:

Woman's Aid	4
The Crescent Playgroup	3
Playbase	1
LASC (Saturday, Paradykes & Roslin)	6
Bonnyrigg ASC	3
Newtongrange ASC	1
Mayfield & St. Luke's Primary Schools	8

Total 26 involving 208 children and 61 adults

7. Extra outputs from the project

1. Postcards compiled into a handout
2. Workshop handout (and possible workshop that Play Midlothian could offer in future)
3. Case studies (included in final report)

Appendix 3. Designing in sensory qualities: source material

It was widely expressed that play areas would be better if sensory elements were designed in. In this appendix, some source material is provided which may aid discussion and generate ideas to help with implementation of recommendations in this report.

The Sensory Trust

www.sensorytrust.org.uk

The Sensory Trust is a leading authority on inclusive and sensory design. They use nature and the outdoors to improve the health and wellbeing of people living with disability and health issues, their families and carers.

The Sensory Trust's aim is to make the outdoors accessible and enjoyable for all people, regardless of age, ability or social circumstance.

The Sensory Trust has a range of resources and guidance which would assist in creating better spaces for children's play. In particular, the Inclusive Play Booklet is highly recommended reading, with explanations of the Access Chain and common issues and points to consider in relation to children and adults with a range of needs.

<http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/inclusive-play-booklet.pdf>

"The overall aim is to ensure that all children have access to an equal quality of experience. It is important to note that this doesn't mean that every bit has to be accessible to everyone, but it does mean that it all needs to add up to a great experience for everyone."

Design guidance for play spaces. Forestry Commission England.

[https://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fce-design-guidance-for-play-spaces.pdf/\\$FILE/fce-design-guidance-for-play-spaces.pdf](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fce-design-guidance-for-play-spaces.pdf/$FILE/fce-design-guidance-for-play-spaces.pdf)

This short guidance note sets out principles for developing play spaces. The aim is to create naturalistic play spaces and should encourage children to explore the natural environment and to take part in active play where they have the opportunity to create their own play environments and activities. Although written in the context of Forestry Commission land, the guidance is very pertinent to the development of schemes to integrate natural materials, loose parts, planting and sensory features into play spaces.

Design for play – A guide to creating successful play spaces. Play England.

<http://playengland.org.uk/media/70684/design-for-play.pdf>

"The guide is intended to inform the creation of outdoor play space, that does justice to children's endless capacity for adventure and imagination, their fundamental need for exercise and social interaction and, above all, to their innate sense of fun. Places where children play can be important social places, not just for children and young people, but also for parents, carers and the wider

community. They should be places where children and young people can enjoy spending time, be physically active, interact with their natural surroundings, experience change and continuity, take risks in an environment where they feel safe and, of course, play –alone or with others –in a wide variety of ways.”

The guide aims to show that, with imagination, planning and an understanding of children’s needs, it is possible to create and maintain exciting play areas for children and young people of different ages, sometimes by making only small changes to existing provision. It also aims to provide the ideas and the practical resources for building new play areas in a fresher and more inspiring way than is common practice at present.

The guide offers comprehensive guidance and points of inspiration which include attention to the five senses, inclusion, social interaction, design processes and materials.

Designing for Inclusive Play: Applying the Principles of Universal Design to the Playground

Jennifer K. Skulski, CPSI National Center on Accessibility, Indiana University – Bloomington

<http://www.ncaonline.org/resources/articles/playground-universaldesign.shtml>

Although this article is in the context of USA and the pictures now look a little dated in terms of design, the article provides an interesting discussion on the application of the Principles of Universal Design to space for play.

Developing accessible play spaces – A good practice guide. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/131049.pdf>

“All children do not need to access play spaces in the same way but they are all fundamentally entitled to go out to play. Good design of public play spaces is needed in order to make this possible. Each child is different – not every piece of equipment in a play space needs to be accessible to every child but access to the social experience of play is key. The key recommendation of the guide is that developers should concentrate on making the environment fit the child.”

Appendix 4. Project context and definitions

1. Context: Midlothian, Scotland, UK, International

<p>Midlothian</p>	<p>Play Midlothian works to improve and increase children’s opportunity to play, because we know how important play is for their health, wellbeing and development.</p> <p>Development of Play Strategy in Midlothian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision of the Midlothian Play Strategy: All children and young people will have access a variety of high quality inclusive play opportunities. - Play Strategy theme of Play for All: All children have a right to play: how should the Play Strategy promote inclusion?
<p>Scotland</p>	<p>National Play Strategy Vision</p> <p>We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people, in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities.</p> <p>Further reference points</p> <p>Action 9.6 (Play Strategy for Scotland: Action Plan) <i>Playing with Quality and Equality</i>, Inclusive Play Review, November 2015 http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/10/1795</p> <p><i>Inclusive Play In Scotland: Context, Concepts And Current Research</i>” Scottish Government, 2015 http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/10/1795</p> <p>In regard to disability issues, the Scottish Government has responsibility for the majority of public services including local councils, education, housing, social work and the National Health Service.</p>
<p>UK</p>	<p>For disabled people in Scotland, the UK Government is responsible for equality legislation including the Disability Discrimination Act, the Disability Rights Commission, employment and income and benefits.</p> <p>The Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.</p>
<p>International</p>	<p>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular</p> <p>Article 23 - disabled children’s rights to active participation in the community</p> <p>Article 31 – every child has the right to play</p> <p>UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities article 30(d) children with disabilities have a right to equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system</p>

2. Working definitions and concepts for the purposes of the project

The social model of disability

The social model of disability is a framework that understands disability as a problem that society has and not a person's condition or impairment. Therefore, society has the responsibility to mitigate the barriers it has developed. The model seeks to empower disabled people by challenging society to remove these barriers. It adopts an inclusive approach that promotes pro-active thought on how certain adjustments can be made to create a more equal society.

Source: www.disabilityscot.org.uk/impact-2/

This is usefully described in *Disabled children and access to outdoor playgrounds* John A. & Wheway, R. (2004):

“By “Disabled Children” we mean children who experience discrimination on the grounds of their impairment(s). These discriminative practices will often appear in people's attitudes, in the built environment and institutionalised systems, thus making it difficult, or sometimes impossible, for disabled children to join in. Impairment is what we have. Disability is what we experience.”

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act sets out the different ways to treat someone which are against the law, such as: 'direct and indirect discrimination', 'harassment', 'victimisation' and 'failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person'.

Discrimination

Discrimination means treating you unfairly because of who you are. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of their: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

These are called '**protected characteristics**'. Discrimination because of one or more of these 'characteristics' is unlawful under the Equality Act.

Disability definition

The Equality Act defines a disabled person as “someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

The Equality Act includes special rules that ensure that people with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis are seen as disabled people from when they are diagnosed, rather than from when the condition stops them carrying out normal day-to-day activities. Some conditions aren't covered by the disability definition e.g. addiction to non-prescribed drugs or alcohol.

Source: www.disabilityscot.org.uk/info-guides/the-equality-act/

3. How many disabled children are there in Midlothian?

This question could not be answered precisely however two sources of information were found (as follows) and school role data was noted.

Families with disabled children (UK wide-information)

- There are 770,000 disabled children under the age of 16 in the UK. That equates to 1 child in 20.
- 99.1 per cent of disabled children live at home and are supported by their families.
- 52 per cent of families with a disabled child are at risk of experiencing poverty.

<http://www.dlf.org.uk/content/key-facts>

<http://www.cafamily.org.uk/professionals/research/>

Information source: For Scotland's Disabled Children

600 children aged 0-17 living in Midlothian were in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in 2009.

- In 2009, there were 561 pupils who were either based in a special school or had Additional Support Needs in primary and secondary schools in Midlothian.
- There were 242 pupils assessed or declared as disabled in Midlothian's schools.
- 94 children were attending special schools in Midlothian in 2009.
- In 2009, there were 291 primary school pupils with Additional Support Needs and 176 secondary school pupils with Additional Support Needs.
- There are two special schools in this local authority area and in 2010 one was in "good" condition and the condition of the other was "not recorded".
- In 2009, there were 28 teachers in special schools in Midlothian and the pupil teacher ratio was 3.3.
- There were 65 ASN auxiliaries or care assistants working in Midlothian's schools in 2009: 37 in primary schools, five in secondary schools and 23 in special schools.
- The number of social work staff in the Council working within "services for children" in 2009 was 123.

www.fsd.org.uk/how-can-you-help/previous-campaigns/setting-the-scene/areas/midlothian