

East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment

Summary Report

March 2024



Image 1: Welcoming sign at Ormiston Park Play Area

1 Background to Play

The national vision for play

The Scottish Government has committed to embedding children's right to play across every aspect of children's everyday lives.

The vision for play in Scotland

*"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."*¹

Why is play important?

Children's right to play is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Research² clearly demonstrates the individual and societal benefits of play for children and young people. We now know that play leads to a wide range of interconnected beneficial outcomes to play across the cognitive, physical, emotional and social developmental areas. However, research also demonstrates that play also has positive societal outcomes through building healthier and more tolerant societies.

What do we mean by play?

Play is not easily defined and can take many forms. It can be active, passive, solitary, independent, assisted, social, exploratory, educational or just for fun. It can happen indoors or outdoors. It can be structured, creative, messy, entirely facilitated by the imagination or can involve using the latest gadget. However, no matter what form play may take, what is important is that every child's right to play is respected and they are allowed the freedom to choose how and when they play.

What are 'high quality play opportunities'?

The varied forms of play means it is not easy to assess quality. High quality play opportunities may be structured or entirely child-led. They may be taking place in spaces specifically designed for play or in spaces in which play has not been planned. It may be taking place outwith the control or view of adults. Further, by its very nature 'high quality' provision will vary in different circumstances and locations. However, in terms of the provision and assessment of play opportunities and environments, in general we might expect 'high quality opportunities' to happen when:

- the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are put into practice.
- the environment provides stimulus for play to flourish.
- if adults are involved, they work to established ethical and professional standards.³

It is also increasingly understood that children need challenge and risk when they play, so a balance must be sought between keeping children safe from harm while also allowing them to engage in risky activities.⁴

¹ [Play Strategy for Scotland: our vision](#)

² Play for a Change, 2008; [Getting it Right for Play: an evidence base](#); [The Play Return](#); [Play is the Way](#)

³ [Play Strategy for Scotland: our action plan](#)

⁴ [Managing Risk in Play Provision](#)

2 Play Sufficiency Assessments

Why do a Play Sufficiency Assessment?

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced new duties on planning authorities to assess the sufficiency of outdoor play opportunities for children and young people in their area and use the assessments to inform their Local Development Plan.

What is a Play Sufficiency Assessment?

The Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) is intended to provide an overall picture as to the provision and distribution of outdoor play opportunities for children across the totality of a local authority area. The statutory requirements for PSAs are laid out in the Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023⁵. **The regulations specify that all PSAs should provide statements as regards to the overall quality, quantity and accessibility of formal and informal outdoor play opportunities in the planning authority's area, and in each locality within the planning authority's area.** The Regulations define children as any person under the age of 18 years.

Regulation 3(1) requires that PSAs take the form of a written report, incorporating maps as required. The Regulation provides flexibility for planning authorities to include information that is meaningful locally and to align the Assessment with other relevant areas of work such as the Open Space Audit and Strategy and local Play Strategy, however the PSA must feed into the Local Development Plan.

What does a Play Sufficiency Assessment need to include?

The Regulations require PSAs to include a map identifying locations of all formal play spaces and statements as regards to **the quantity, quality and accessibility of both formal and informal outdoor play opportunities**. Informal play spaces are defined as areas of open space of which the primary function is not play. To achieve this, authorities can draw upon a range of alternative assessments, for example previous assessments of open and green spaces, to inform the PSA. Further details of the requirements are provided in the Scottish Government's Planning Guidance on PSAs⁶.

Regulation 4 requires that in preparing the PSA, planning authorities must consult with children, parents and carers, Community Councils, and the general public.

How often do we need to assess play sufficiency?

The PSA will inform the Evidence Report for the next East Lothian Local Development Plan, and it is anticipated that future PSAs will be undertaken to coincide with future Local Development Planning processes.

3 The Process for Assessing Play in East Lothian

Aim of the Play Sufficiency Assessment in East Lothian

East Lothian Council commissioned Play Scotland to assess the quantity, quality and accessibility of their play spaces to inform their baseline PSA. Play Scotland undertook the following:

⁵ [The Town and Country Planning \(Play Sufficiency Assessment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

⁶ [Play Sufficiency Assessment Regulations 2023: planning guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

- Desktop analysis of documents relating to play and play spaces, including recent relevant consultations undertaken in the local authority.
- Assessment of the quantity of formal play spaces across the full Local Authority area and major settlements through the use of GIS mapping to identify walking distances to formal play spaces at half-mile and quarter-mile distances.
- Engagement with children and young people about their views on the sufficiency of formal and informal play spaces, with particular attention to the views of the following three priority groups:
 - Disabled and Additional Support Needs (ASN) children and families
 - Young women and girls
 - Early years (0-4 year olds) families

In addition, Play Scotland undertook a detailed assessment of all formal public outdoor play spaces in East Lothian, with particular focus on inclusion and accessibility as defined below.

Accessibility and inclusion

The aim of the PSA is to assess the quantity and quality of outdoor play spaces for all children. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) states that governments must ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation, and leisure sporting activities⁷. The National Planning Framework 4 requires new, replacement or improved play provision to be inclusive and accessible for disabled children⁸.

The Children’s Play Policy Forum and UK Play Safety Forum⁹ define accessible and inclusive play spaces as:

An Accessible Play Space is a space which is barrier-free, allows users access to move around the space and offers participation opportunities for a range of differing abilities. Not every child of every ability will be able to actively use everything within an accessible play space.

An Inclusive Play Space provides a barrier-free environment, with supporting infrastructure, which meets the wide and varying play needs of every child. Disabled children and non-disabled children will enjoy high levels of participation opportunities, equally rich in play value.

Play Scotland developed a new Accessibility and Inclusion Play Space Assessment to assess East Lothian’s formal outdoor play spaces. **East Lothian is therefore the first authority in Scotland to undertake a full and transparent assessment of accessible and inclusive play provision in formal outdoor play spaces.** As noted by the Children’s Play Policy Forum and UK Play Safety Forum Joint Position Statement¹⁰, capital and revenue budgets for the provision of children’s play facilities are limited, therefore **there is no expectation that all play spaces be fully accessible and fully inclusive.** However, the joint position statement suggests that “the strategic provision of truly inclusive play spaces at well-chosen destination sites is likely to be a key feature of a reasonable response to legislation”¹¹.

⁷ [Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

⁸ [National Planning Framework 4](#)

⁹ [Including Disabled Children in Play Provision](#)

¹⁰ [Including Disabled Children in Play Provision](#)

¹¹ [Including Disabled Children in Play Provision](#)

Methodology: Research framework

The PSA requires assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of informal and formal play spaces across the authority area. To achieve this, the following methods were adopted:

- The **quantity of formal outdoor play spaces** was assessed via a GIS survey. This survey identified the location and walking distances to each formal outdoor play space within each main settlement and across the authority area.
- The **quantity of informal outdoor play spaces** was assessed through drawing on East Lothian Council assessments, audits and reports, including the Open Space Audit¹² and Green Network Strategy¹³.
- The **quality of formal outdoor play spaces** was assessed via in-situ visual assessments of every formal outdoor play space across the entirety of the authority area and through direct engagement with children and families in East Lothian.
- The **quality of informal outdoor play spaces** was assessed via direct engagement with children and families in East Lothian.
- The **accessibility of formal outdoor play spaces** was assessed via in-situ visual assessments of every formal outdoor play space across the entirety of the authority area alongside site visits to a sample of play spaces by disabled children and their families supported by staff from East Lothian Play Association (ELPA) and Can Do special needs playscheme.

Research tools

The quality assessment used three data collection tools developed by Play Scotland. These tools were:

- **Play Space Survey** – in-situ visual assessments looking at the play space environment and features, and the quality and accessibility of play provision in formal outdoor play spaces.
- **Play Opportunities Survey** – in-situ visual assessments looking at the quality and range of play opportunities provided within formal outdoor play spaces.
- **Play Needs Survey** – facilitated and online survey of children’s play preferences to capture their perspectives on the types and availability of formal and informal outdoor play in their local area.

Participation and engagement to inform the Play Sufficiency Assessment

Alongside in-situ assessments of all formal outdoor play spaces in the authority area, twelve formal play spaces were assessed by primary school children, disabled children and families, and specialist practitioners. All primary and secondary schools in the East Lothian authority were invited to participate via an email invitation, and five primary schools responded.

Overall, the PSA includes the following range of views and forms of assessment:

¹² [East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018](#)

¹³ [East Lothian Green Network Strategy – Supplementary Planning Guidance](#)

Table 1: Overview of target group participants, assessed play spaces and assessment methods

Target Group	Number of Participants	Play Spaces / Locations Assessed	Method of Assessment	Facilitated by
Disabled children and families	48 families	Neilson Park (Haddington) Bleachingfield (Dunbar) Whitecraig Park (Whitecraig) Quayside Park (Musselburgh) Cemetery Park (Prestonpans)	Play Space Survey Play Opportunities Survey	East Lothian Play Association (ELPA) Can Do
Primary school children	78 children (P3-P7)	East Linton Park (East Linton) Goolwa Park (Port Seton) South Seton Park (Port Seton) Windygoul Park (Tranent) Lewisvale Park (Musselburgh) Musselburgh Burgh Primary (Musselburgh) Innerwick Primary (Innerwick)	Play Opportunities Survey Place Standard Assessment	Play Scotland Assessment Team
Young women and girls	8 young women and girls	North Berwick	Play Needs Survey	Play Scotland Assessment Team
Early years families	25 adults 21 children	Musselburgh	Play Needs Survey	Play Scotland Assessment Team

Assessment of the Play Spaces

Assessment of East Lothian’s formal outdoor play spaces took place over a period of five weeks in March and April 2023. All Council owned or managed formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian were assessed at least once. In total 121 formal play outdoor play spaces owned or managed by East Lothian Council were assessed by the Play Scotland assessment team.

Five play spaces were also assessed by disabled children and their families with the support from specialist practitioners from East Lothian Play Association (ELPA) and Can Do. The play spaces assessed by that group were Neilson Park (Haddington), Bleachingfield (Dunbar), Whitecraig Park (Whitecraig), Quayside Park (Musselburgh) and Cemetery Park (Prestonpans).

A further five formal outdoor play spaces were assessed by primary school children. These were East Linton Park (East Linton), Goolwa Park (Port Seton), South Seton Park (Port Seton), Windygoul Park (Tranent) and Lewisvale Park (Musselburgh).

Privately owned play spaces that are not Council owned or managed were not included in the assessment, as there is a lack of data about these spaces, and the Council has no jurisdiction to influence their maintenance or to improve or make recommendations for change in these spaces. This is an area that might be considered again in future PSA reports.

Public consultation on findings of the Play Sufficiency Assessment

Following the consultation and engagement with children and young people and their parents and carers which was undertaken by Play Scotland, the Council then undertook a further round of public consultation on the draft findings of the PSA, during October to November 2023.

This included consultation on specific Community Council Areas across East Lothian. The consultation was publicised and circulated widely, including to all Community Councils.

There were 291 responses to this public consultation on the PSA findings. The detailed results from this consultation are set out in Appendix 1.

The findings from all these stages of consultation and engagement across our communities have informed and been incorporated into the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment.

4 Play Sufficiency in East Lothian

The detailed PSA for East Lothian, including maps and lists of all the play areas, is set out in the PSA Technical Report. The key findings of East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment are as follows:

4.1 The quantity of formal and informal play in East Lothian

The quantity of formal outdoor play spaces

KEY MESSAGE: East Lothian has 121 Council owned or managed formal outdoor play spaces distributed across the entirety of the local authority area.

East Lothian has 121 Council owned or managed formal outdoor play spaces. Figure 1 illustrates the location of all these formal outdoor play spaces across the East Lothian authority area. There is a good distribution of formal outdoor play spaces across the local authority relative to the size of the settlements.

Figure 1: East Lothian Authority Area Map Identifying All Council Managed Formal Outdoor Play Spaces

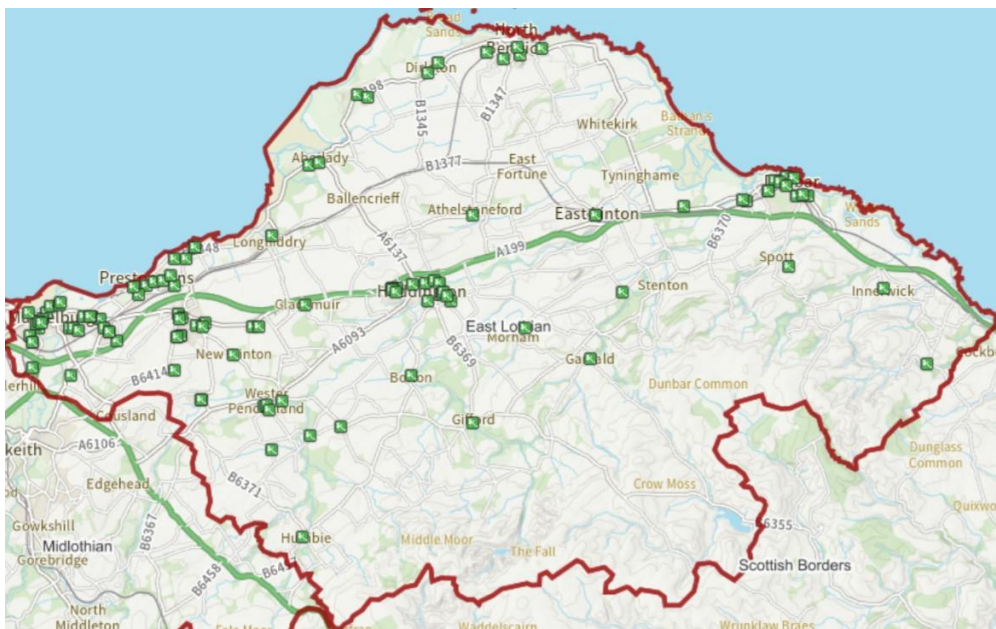


Table 2: Number of Formal Outdoor Play Spaces per Main Settlement

Settlement	Number of Formal Outdoor Play Spaces
Dunbar	10

Haddington	16
Musselburgh	20
North Berwick	6
Prestonpans	7
Tranent	10

Walking distances to formal outdoor play spaces

KEY MESSAGE: Most residents in the six largest settlements have at least one formal outdoor play space within a 5-minute walk.

The analysis demonstrates good levels of access to formal outdoor play spaces across the authority area. Over half of residential areas in the six largest settlements have a formal outdoor play space within a 5-minute walk and nearly all residential areas in these settlements have at least one formal outdoor play space within a 15-minute walk.

The quantity of informal outdoor play spaces

KEY MESSAGE: East Lothian provides a wealth of informal outdoor play opportunities across a wide range of natural settings.

East Lothian is a rural and coastal authority area with a high proportion of open and green spaces. East Lothian therefore provides a wealth of informal outdoor play opportunities across a wide range of natural settings, including woodland and forests, coastal areas and beaches, and grasslands and wetlands.

4.2 The quality of formal and informal play in East Lothian

The quality of formal outdoor play spaces

Every formal outdoor play space in East Lothian was assessed for the quality of play opportunities. Each individual piece of fixed equipment within each play space was included in the assessment. In total, 889 pieces of fixed equipment were assessed. On average there were seven pieces of fixed equipment per play space, although most play spaces have between four and ten pieces of equipment. Three play spaces have 20 or more pieces of fixed equipment.

Quality of formal outdoor play space environments

KEY MESSAGE: East Lothian's formal outdoor play spaces are generally clean and well maintained.

All play spaces were assessed as being free from dog mess (100%) and the vast majority free from hazardous waste (97%) and vandalism (97%). Most spaces are well maintained (82%) with litter bins provided (88%) and fencing/gates in good condition (85%). Most spaces have an immediate outlook that is green or open space (83%) and overlooked by housing or offices (88%). Most play spaces are free from traffic and noise pollution (91%) and free from any signage indicating that play is prohibited (90%). Just under half (41%) of play spaces are at least 20 metres from a road and unfenced, with the same proportion (41%) having working nearby lighting. While only some play

spaces have clear signage about control of dogs (28%) and specific bins available for dog mess (35%), this does not seem to have resulted in dog mess being an issue.

Quality of formal outdoor play space features

KEY MESSAGE: Most formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian are in attractive sites with natural features such as trees, bushes or shrubs.

Most play spaces were assessed as being in attractive sites (84%) with short grass (82%) and trees, bushes or shrubs (62%). Most play spaces have adult seating (85%) although only 9% of spaces have specific seating areas for children. Very few play spaces have public toilets (4%), however, it is recognised that this is not a necessary feature for small neighbourhood play spaces. Very few play spaces provide cycle racks (9%). In relation to natural play resources, just over one third of formal play spaces have undulating ground or mounding (37%) however very few spaces have other natural features such as long grass (11%), rocks or boulders (7%), or permanent water features (2%). Very few spaces explicitly welcome play (8%) or provide shade or sheltered areas (5%).

Quality of formal outdoor play opportunities

General play opportunities

KEY MESSAGE: Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian provide welcoming and safe play environments with a variety of general play opportunities.

Most play spaces (81% and 83%) had fixed equipment suitable for the 0-4 and 5-11 age groups. Just over half (56%) of play spaces had equipment suitable for the 12-15 year old age group, falling to 42% for 16-17 year olds. This demonstrates that East Lothian provides a good variety of general play opportunities in proportion to the play needs across the age brackets. Similarly, while 78% of play spaces felt welcoming and safe for children under 12, this fell to 55% and 43% respectively for the 12-15 and 16-17 age ranges. This reduction correlated with play spaces not including equipment suitable for older young people so is perhaps unsurprising. It should be noted that not all play spaces can or should cater for the full age range due to limits on physical space and allocated budgets, however there should be appropriate opportunities across the age ranges.

Opportunities for physical play

KEY MESSAGE: Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian provide a good range of opportunities for physical play, particularly for younger children.

The Play Opportunities Survey identified that play spaces in East Lothian provide a good range of opportunities for physical play. This is particularly good for children under the age of 12, although there are fewer opportunities for physical play for older age groups.

Opportunities for adventurous and risky play

KEY MESSAGE: Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian offer a range of opportunities for younger children to take risks and experience adventurous play.

The Play Opportunities Survey identified that most formal outdoor play spaces provide opportunities for children under 12 years of age to take risks and experience adventurous physical play. This falls to half and just over one-third of play spaces for the 12-15 and 16-17 year old age groups. For example, while the majority of play spaces provide opportunities for children under 12 years to climb and jump from high up, this reduces by half for the 16-17 year old age range. There are limited opportunities for roller skating or skateboarding, although there are some good examples of skate ramps and pump tracks within the authority area. There are no specific areas designated to practice parkour, however there are areas where this may be possible and appropriate, for example some skate parks. The design of the fixed equipment also means that there are almost no opportunities for children and young people to move equipment in ways to make play more difficult or challenging.

Opportunities for creative play

KEY MESSAGE: Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian currently offer limited opportunities for creative play.

The Play Opportunities Survey identified limited opportunities for all forms of creative play across all age ranges. Some formal outdoor play spaces have opportunities for pretend play for the 0-4 (17%) and 5-11 (11%) age groups but this reduces to 2% for the 12-15 and 16-17 age groups. There are limited opportunities for children to control their form of play, with nearly all (95%) of play spaces not providing any opportunities for children to engage in different ways with the equipment.

Opportunities for social play

KEY MESSAGE: Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian provide a good range of opportunities for younger children to engage in social play.

The Play Opportunities Survey identified that most formal outdoor play spaces provide opportunities for social play across different ages and abilities for the under-12s, although this falls to 45% and 37% for the 12-15 year old and 16-17 year old age groups. It should be noted that this relates to age-related differences in ability rather than play spaces enabling play with children and young people with disabilities.

Opportunities for nature-based play

KEY MESSAGE: Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian provide limited opportunities for children to play on or with a range of natural resources.

The Play Opportunities Survey identified limited opportunities for nature-based play within the boundaries of formal outdoor play spaces, with only 10-15% of play spaces including long grass, wildlife, plants, insects or trees for climbing. There are some good examples of incorporating nature into play spaces, for example through the nature area in Cuthill Park and the bug hotel in Ormiston Play Space. It is also recognised that many formal play spaces are located within parks and green areas which provide informal opportunities for nature-based play.

Quality of informal outdoor play opportunities

KEY MESSAGE: East Lothian provides a good range of informal outdoor play opportunities in a range of natural and green spaces.

Participants across all target groups spoke positively about the availability of natural spaces in East Lothian, with primary school children stating that they are generally very pleased with the natural spaces in East Lothian. The children stated that they appreciate their rural lifestyle and the green space, wildlife, and cleanliness that go along with it. Specifically, they appreciate hearing birds and other wildlife, seeing a variety of colourful flowers, and the woodlands and trees. The children further suggest that green spaces get you outside and are a good place for active socialising. Children also stated that the location of the formal play areas in wider 'green spaces' as being important, suggesting that they integrate the surrounding informal green spaces into their play which enhances their play experience.

The young women and girls' group identified nature as important to their informal play and 'hang out' opportunities, and were very positive about the opportunities they had to access surrounding natural environments.

The disabled families' groups identified the importance of access to natural resources and spaces to provide a variety of informal outdoor play experiences, however accessibility remains an issue.

4.3 The accessibility of formal play spaces in East Lothian

The Accessibility and Inclusion Play Space Assessment was used to assess all formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian for opportunities and barriers to play for disabled children and families. This is a new form of assessment that aims to inform the development of inclusive formal outdoor play spaces as required by the UNCDRP and the NPF4. **There is no expectation that all formal outdoor play spaces be fully inclusive. The assessment is designed to be used to inform meaningful community engagement and strategic decisions regarding investment in play space renewal.**

Accessible play in formal outdoor play spaces

KEY MESSAGE: Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian offer limited accessible play opportunities for disabled children and families.

The Accessibility and Inclusion Play Space Assessment allocates scores to each formal outdoor play space based on set accessibility criteria. Due to most play spaces having a mixture of grass rubber matting and/or woodchip surfacing with no or very limited hard surface access, most play spaces

(81%) were allocated the minimum score (1). Play spaces with this score are either not accessible to anyone using a mobility aid or wheelchair, or the play spaces do not provide any accessible fixed play equipment. A few play spaces (20%) were accessible and therefore achieved a higher score. This was mainly due to the availability of an inclusive roundabout, multi-use games area (MUGA), skate ramp or pump track. MUGAs, skate ramps and pump tracks often provide hard surface access to part of the play space and are therefore more likely to be accessible to anyone using mobility aids or wheelchairs.

The assessment completed by the disabled children and families of the five selected play spaces supports the overall assessment. This assessment identifies a significant lack of accessible play opportunities for disabled children and families across all five assessed play spaces.

It is recognised that it would not be expected for most formal play spaces to have these features, however it would be expected that a **reasonable** number of formal play spaces throughout the authority provide a range of accessible and inclusive play opportunities. Each Local Authority should make this judgement based on improvement priorities, the demographic of each area, available budgets and priorities.

Inclusive formal outdoor play opportunities

KEY MESSAGE: Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian currently offer limited inclusive infrastructure to support inclusive play opportunities.

The Accessibility and Inclusion Play Space Assessment allocates scores to each formal outdoor play space based on set inclusion criteria. Almost all (96%) of the formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian scored the minimum (1) for inclusive play. This was mainly due to a lack of specific infrastructure to support inclusive access into and around play spaces, along with lack of barrier-free play opportunities. Five play spaces were assessed as meeting the criteria for a score of 2, primarily due to the inclusion of a MUGA and/or skate park or pump track within the play space.

The assessment of five formal outdoor play spaces by disabled families reflects the main findings. This assessment identifies a significant lack of inclusive, integrated play opportunities across all five assessed formal outdoor play spaces.

It is recognised that it would not be expected for most formal play spaces to have these features, however it would be expected that a small number of formal play spaces throughout the authority include these features. Each Local Authority should make this judgement based on improvement priorities, the demographic of each area, available budgets and priorities.

Children's views on accessible and inclusive play

Disabled children's views

During the disabled families' assessment, all families were asked their views on what could make the play spaces better for everyone. Common responses included:

- More equipment suitable for disabled people, including wheelchair accessible swings.
- Better lighting to extend the opportunity to play during the hours of dusk. This was noted as being particularly important to support play opportunities for teenage age groups.

- Stable surfaces designed into the layout of the play area to make features of the play area accessible and inclusive.
- More accessible seating and shelters.
- More accessible and inclusive toilets.
- Ensuring quiet areas and hang out areas used by children and young people are accessible for anyone with a physical disability using a mobility aid or wheelchair.
- More lower level sensory play opportunities
- More opportunities for social play.

4.4 Play Sufficiency Assessment findings by Community Council Area (locality)

The key findings identified by Play Scotland on the quantity, quality and accessibility of **formal play spaces** for each Community Council Area of East Lothian are set out in the Technical Report. The summaries for each Community Council Area have incorporated feedback received in the public consultation on the Draft PSA.

Informal play spaces: Assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of the informal play spaces was undertaken through the East Lothian Open Space Strategy.

The detailed findings from the public consultation for each Community Council Area are reported in Appendix 1. This includes commentary on both formal and informal play spaces across East Lothian.

Maps of the play spaces in all Community Council Areas are in Appendix 3.

The Formal Play Space Assessment Scores for all formal play areas in each Community Council Area are set out in Appendix 4.

5 Key Findings of East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment

Quantity of formal outdoor play spaces

- East Lothian has 121 Council owned or managed formal outdoor play spaces distributed across the entirety of the local authority area.
- Most residents in the six largest settlements have at least one formal outdoor play space within a 5-minute walk.

Quantity of informal outdoor play

- East Lothian has a wealth of informal outdoor play opportunities across a wide range of natural settings, including woodland and forests, coastal areas and beaches, and grasslands and wetlands.
- Most East Lothian residents live within a 5-minute walk of their nearest useable green space.

Quality of formal outdoor play spaces

- Outdoor formal play spaces in East Lothian are generally attractive, clean, and well-maintained sites which are free from dog mess, vandalism, and traffic and noise pollution. Most play spaces are green and are overlooked by houses and offices.

- There is a lack of nearby or signposted cycle racks and public toilets and a lack of natural features within formal play spaces.
- Most formal play spaces provide a range of opportunities for physical and risky play for younger children. There are significantly fewer opportunities for physical and risky play for the 12-17 year old age ranges.
- Formal play spaces offer opportunities for a variety of physical play experiences, including running, skipping, hopping, jumping, swinging, sliding, spinning and rocking. There are minimal opportunities for crawling, balancing or bouncing and limited formal opportunities for bike or scooter riding, skateboarding or roller skating within formal play spaces.
- Opportunities to engage in creative, sensory, and nature-based play in formal play spaces are extremely limited across all age ranges.
- There are opportunities for social play across different ages, although this reduces in the older age ranges. There are minimal opportunities for children with differing abilities to play together.
- Some formal play spaces offer calmer spaces to be on your own or with a small group of friends, however these are usually for the younger age groups and inaccessible to anyone using a mobility aid or wheelchair.

Quality of informal outdoor play

- East Lothian residents highly value the range of informal outdoor play opportunities offered in natural and green settings across East Lothian.
- Most East Lothian residents are satisfied or very satisfied with their nearest open and green spaces.
- All PSA target groups identified access to green and natural spaces as important to ensuring the quality of their informal outdoor play opportunities.
- Accessibility to natural and green spaces can be challenging for disabled families.

Accessibility of formal outdoor play spaces

- There are minimal play opportunities for disabled children, young people and families in formal outdoor play spaces across East Lothian. This includes children with Additional Support Needs (ASN).
- No play spaces are fully accessible or inclusive, and where accessible equipment is included within the play space this offers a limited play experience and is often located on the periphery of the main play space.
- There is minimal inclusive infrastructure to support access into and around play spaces.

6 Summary of Key Findings of the Play Sufficiency Assessment supported by the public consultation

Appendix 1 sets out the detailed responses received during the public consultation.

Key Overall Message

The quantity of outdoor play spaces in East Lothian is good with most residents having access to formal or informal outdoor play spaces near to their homes. Any future improvements should therefore focus on strengthening the quality and accessibility of both formal and informal outdoor play opportunities.

Key Positive Messages

East Lothian has 121 Council owned and managed formal outdoor play spaces distributed across the entirety of the local authority area.

Most residents in the six largest settlements have at least one formal outdoor play space within a 5-minute walk.

East Lothian provides a wealth of informal outdoor play opportunities across a wide range of natural settings.

East Lothian's formal outdoor play spaces are clean and well maintained.

Most formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian are attractive sites with natural features such as trees, bushes or shrubs.

Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian provide welcoming and safe play environments with a variety of general play opportunities.

Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian provide a good range of opportunities for physical play, particularly for younger children.

Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian offer a range of opportunities for younger children to take risks and experience adventurous play.

Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian provide a good range of opportunities for younger children to engage in social play.

East Lothian provides a good range of informal outdoor play opportunities in a range of natural and green spaces.

Key Development Messages

Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian currently offer limited opportunities for creative play.

Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian provide limited opportunities for children to play on or with a range of natural resources within the boundary of the play space.

Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian offer limited accessible play opportunities for disabled children and families.

Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian currently offer limited inclusive infrastructure to support inclusive play opportunities.

7 Recommendations

The Play Sufficiency Assessment undertaken by Play Scotland identified that there is an excellent quantity of play provision in East Lothian, and a good range of physical and risky play opportunities. The PSA identified important ways to strengthen the quality and accessibility of play opportunities in East Lothian where future funding opportunities would make this possible. The following recommendations are intended to provide focus for future investment in play provision.

Opportunities to strengthen the quantity of outdoor play in East Lothian

The quantity of outdoor play spaces in East Lothian is good with most residents in the six main settlements having access to formal or informal outdoor play space near to their homes. Any future improvements should therefore focus on strengthening the quality and accessibility of both formal and informal outdoor play opportunities.

Opportunities to strengthen the quality of outdoor play in East Lothian

The following recommendations identify ways that the quality and range of outdoor play opportunities in East Lothian could be improved:

- **Increase opportunities for sensory, creative and nature-based play** – play spaces provide a variety of physical play opportunities however there are minimal opportunities for other forms of play. Including a wider variety of sensory, creative and nature-based play opportunities within formal play spaces supports child development and promotes inclusion.
- **Increase all play opportunities for the 12-17 year old groups** – there are significantly fewer play opportunities for older children across all forms of play. Provision of play opportunities across the full age range promotes inclusive play and builds community cohesion.
- **Increase opportunities for calm, quiet play** – there is a lack of quiet spaces in formal play spaces for children to be on their own or to play with small groups of friends, particularly for older age groups and for anyone with mobility difficulties. Provision of quieter spaces promotes a wider variety of play and facilitates accessibility for anyone with sensory sensitivity.
- **Increase opportunities for social play** – there is a lack of opportunities for children with different ages and abilities to play together. This is important to promote inclusion and integration.
- **Increase ‘hang out’ spaces for the 12-17 year old age groups** – there is a lack of places where older children feel welcome to ‘hang out’. Provision of more hangout spaces is particularly important for younger teenagers.

Opportunities to strengthen the accessibility of outdoor play in East Lothian

During the assessment process, assessors identified several ways to improve accessibility and inclusion. Recommendations include:

- **Increase the variety of play space surfaces** – almost all play space surfaces are a mixture of grass rubber matting and woodchip, which makes access difficult for anyone using a mobility aid or wheelchair. A wider variety of surface areas will improve accessibility.

- **Include a wider variety of inclusive fixed equipment** – when available, the only inclusive equipment available for wheelchair users was a roundabout, MUGA or pump track. A wider variety of play equipment with accessible features would improve the variety and inclusivity of play opportunities.
- **Increase opportunities for social, sensory, creative, and natural play** – the focus of most formal play spaces is on physical play. Increasing the variety of play opportunities and utilising natural play resources would increase the variety of play opportunities and promote play across the age and ability ranges.
- **Integrate inclusive play opportunities into the main play space** – when available, inclusive equipment was generally located on the periphery of the play space with minimal hard surface access through the main play space. Integrating play opportunities will enable children with differing abilities to integrate and play within the same spaces.
- **Include features to support play for children with a wider variety of disabilities** – there were minimal features to support inclusive play for anyone with visual impairments or complex additional support needs. More accessible signage, accessible seating and wayfinding routes through play spaces would support inclusion.
- **Improve safe, accessible routes into play spaces** – increasing the amount of inclusive infrastructure into and around play spaces will support accessibility and enable families to use play spaces more regularly and for longer periods of time.
- **Embed lived experience into play space design** – at the time of writing, as far as we understand, no formal consultation had taken place with disabled families to understand and embed local needs into design processes. The disabled families’ assessment identified numerous opportunities to design accessibility into existing play spaces and stated they would welcome further consultation.

ELPA and Can Do provided a detailed report of disabled families’ assessments of formal play spaces in East Lothian (see Appendix 2). Their key recommendations are:

- Embed the social value of inclusive play at the design stages.
- Plan for accessible play and rest sites throughout the play space.
- Widen the variety of play opportunities, including natural, sensory and creative play.
- Increase opportunities for high-value play, including play opportunities for children with complex needs.
- Ensure play spaces feel welcoming for children at differing developmental stages to their peers.
- Provide safe, accessible routes to play spaces, including lighting and nearby transition points.

8 Summary of Key Recommendations supported by the public consultation

Key findings and key recommendations from the public consultation

The quality and range of play opportunities in East Lothian could be improved through:

- Increasing opportunities for sensory, creative and nature-based play
- Increasing all play opportunities for the 12-17 year old groups
- Increasing opportunities for calm, quiet play
- Increasing opportunities for social play
- Increasing ‘hang out’ spaces for the 12-17 year old age groups

Accessibility and inclusion of play opportunities in East Lothian could be improved through:

- Increasing the variety of play space surfaces
- Including a wider variety of inclusive fixed equipment
- Increasing opportunities for social, sensory, creative, and natural play
- Integrating inclusive play opportunities into the main play space
- Including features to support play for children with a wider variety of disabilities
- Improving safe, accessible routes into play spaces
- Embedding lived experience into play space design

The public consultation reiterated the PSA findings that:

- **There is a need to improve the quality and range of play opportunities in East Lothian for**
 - sensory, creative and nature-based play – although it was recognised that the surrounding countryside around our towns and villages, including the hills, woodlands and beaches of East Lothian, already provide significant opportunities for these which are well used by our residents, of all ages;
 - the 12-17 year old groups, including more challenging and risky play for older children and teenagers;
 - calm, quiet play;
 - social play;
 - ‘hang out’ spaces for the 12-17 year old age groups – although it was recognised that this is unlikely to include formal play areas but more likely other outdoor spaces in and around our communities. This will form an action in our forthcoming revised Open Space Strategy.
- **Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian offer limited accessible play opportunities for disabled children and families.**
- **Formal outdoor play spaces in East Lothian currently offer limited inclusive infrastructure to support inclusive play opportunities.**

- **More play opportunities are needed for girls, and several respondents highlighted the examples from the organisation 'Make Space for Girls' as good examples.**
- **In general, East Lothian's formal outdoor play spaces are clean and well maintained, however, local community consultations identified some key locations for priority improvements such as renewal or replacement of play equipment.** We will aim to continue our ongoing programme of maintenance, replacement and renewal of play equipment across the Council's play areas where funding is available.
- **There was a view in some areas that play areas are poorly maintained and repairs take time.** All of the Council's play areas are subject to a continuous and ongoing programme of inspection and maintenance, including daily checks of larger 'destination' play areas, quarterly inspections by Register of Play Inspectors International (RPiI) qualified staff and annual inspections by External Inspectors of Play Areas. Priority repairs are undertaken continually across our 121 play areas and ongoing repairs, maintenance and replacement works are programmed, subject to available funding.
- **We received feedback that woodchip surfacing in our play areas is inaccessible to some users with calls to reduce the areas surfaced with woodchip.** This accords with the findings of our initial consultation and engagement with special needs groups including our disability and inclusion assessment. We will revise our use of woodchip surfacing across our formal play areas by including a greater variety of surfacing where possible, to improve accessibility for a wider range of abilities, subject to funding and ongoing maintenance constraints and noting that a balance is important.
- **Several respondents told us that in their view formal play areas should be fenced. The reasons included to improve the play experience for children with special needs and their parents/carers, the perception of safety, and dogs (see below).** All of our play areas have been risk-assessed and those that are near to roads have fencing around them for safety. We do not generally install fencing around play areas within public parks and open spaces away from roads to enhance the play experience for a wide range of children and young people by encouraging and enabling them to explore the wider 'play landscape' of our parks and greenspaces and get closer to nature. However we will work with special needs groups to identify solutions that may include fencing in some areas but will also look at nature-based alternatives such as appropriate planting of hedges or positioning of planters for community growing to enhance sensory and natural play.
- **We received strong feedback in relation to dogs in play areas, with many community respondents saying that dogs in play areas are a significant problem, particularly in relation to dog fouling, but also in intimidating behaviour of dogs causing alarm to others in the play area.** Irresponsible dog ownership is unfortunately a problem across the county. We will aim to install 'No Dogs in Play Area' signage at play areas, where funding permits, and will continue to work with the Council's Dog Warden and Antisocial Behaviour Team to raise awareness and promote responsible dog ownership around play areas. Additional fencing may be appropriate in some areas; or nature-based alternatives as set out above.
- **The community consultation also identified issues with play provision for some specific areas around the county in particular:**
 - **North-eastern Tranent** (north of the main street, around the Sanderson's Wynd – Lindores Drive area of Tranent): the consultation feedback highlighted a shortfall in

play provision in this area, with insufficient formal play spaces. We are aware of this and we are looking to address this as a matter of priority;

- **Prestonpans**, where the existing provision was felt to be inadequate by some respondents due to anti-social behaviour issues, which were intimidating to others including families, deterring some from playing there. These are wider social issues outwith the scope of this PSA however we will follow this up with our Local Area Partnership and Anti-Social Behaviour Team to seek solutions to these wider social issues affecting some local areas;
- **Areas of Cockenzie and Port Seton**, including some of the smaller play areas near the waterfront and the provision at King George V Park, which was felt to be inadequate by several respondents. The play provision at King George V Park was subject to community consultation when the Community Centre was developed; however we will work with the Local Area Partnership to identify solutions and funding to address issues where we can;
- **Haddington Artillery Park area**, where respondents commented that the small play areas there were of poor quality / poorer provision than in the larger town parks. We will look to address this where future funding opportunities would make this possible;
- **West Barns and New Winton play areas** were also identified by the local communities as particular priorities for improvement and upgrading. We will look to work with communities to address these where future funding opportunities would make this possible.

Next Steps

East Lothian Council will aim to address these findings and recommendations of this Play Sufficiency Assessment in our ongoing management and maintenance of our existing play areas, where future funding opportunities would make this possible, and we will consider incorporating these recommendations in our Local Development Plan as requirements for the future development of play areas.

9 Publication of the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment

The East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment is available to view online on East Lothian Council's website www.eastlothian.gov.uk

The full version of the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment comprises the following parts:

Main Technical Report

Appendix 1: Report of Findings from the Public Consultation on the Draft PSA including by Community Council Area.

Appendix 2: Report by East Lothian Play Association and Can Do: Play Sufficiency Assessment of the accessibility of selected formal outdoor play spaces for disabled children and their families in East Lothian.

Appendix 3: East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment Maps.

Appendix 4: East Lothian Formal Play Space Assessment Scores.

It is intended to produce a child-friendly version of the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment.