

Lottery Funding for Children's Play

Analysis of responses to the consultation document

Introduction

This report has been based on 425 responses to the consultation document. As some respondents may have offered a number of options for questions, total percentages listed under any one question may exceed 100%. Similarly, some respondents may not have indicated a framework preference instead offering views, which appear in Annex B of this report. Throughout the report, percentages are expressed as a measure of those answering each question, not as a measure of all respondents.

This report begins with statistical and pictorial representations of the respondent profile based on: area of work, organisation, geographical location and housing.

This is followed by an overview and a summary of written responses to the questions posed in the consultation document.

Annex A which provides a quick view analysis of responses by respondent types. Comments expressed by less than 5% of respondents appear in Annex A only.

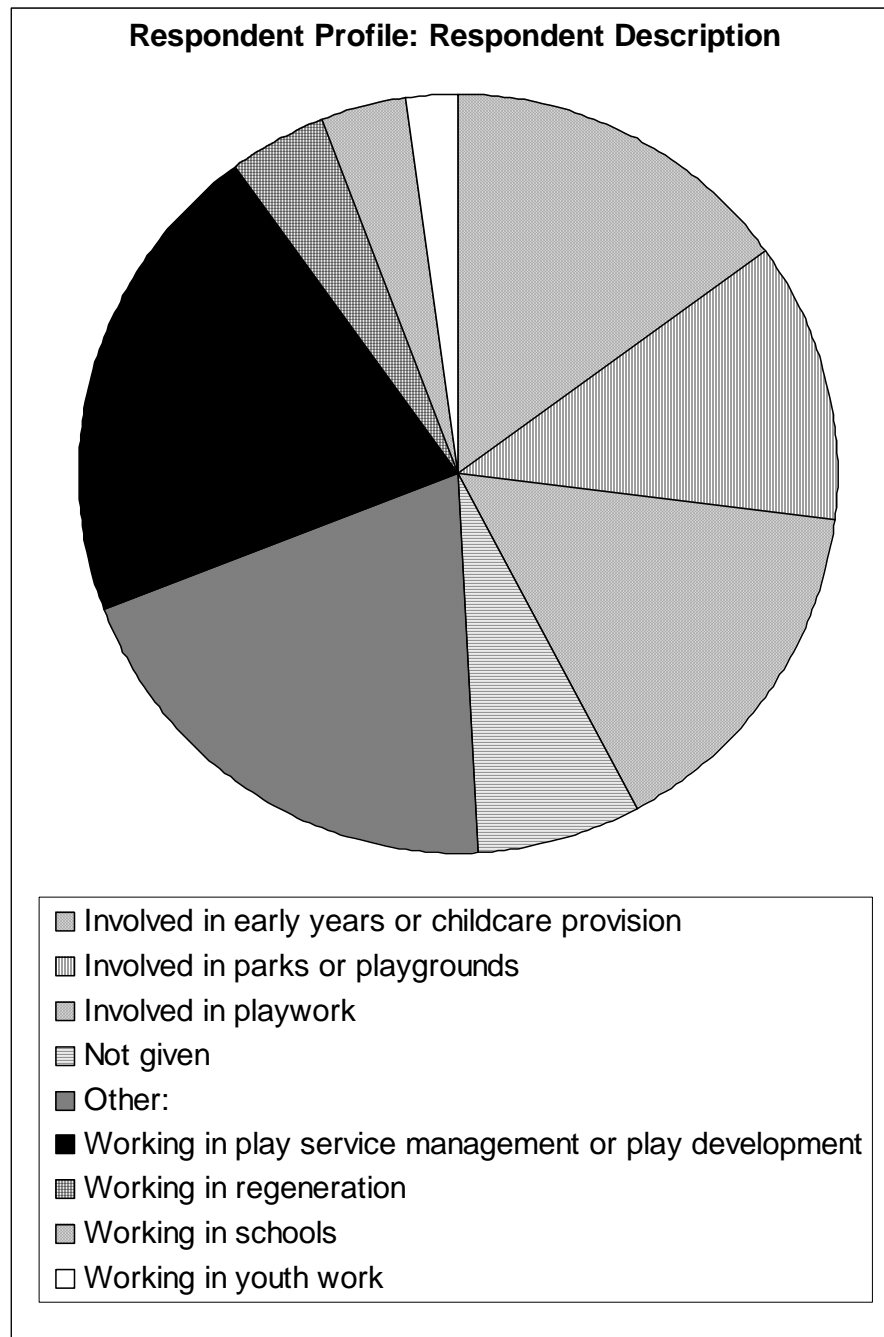
Annex B lists additional suggestions and further comments made by respondents in answer to each question. This annex is offered as an aide to our sponsors and is not intended as a formal part of the report for publication.

Annex C lists all respondents to the consultation document.

Annex D lists those respondents who were willing to be contacted for research purposes or to participate in future consultations.

Annex E lists examples of good practice suggested by respondents in response to question 12 of the consultation.

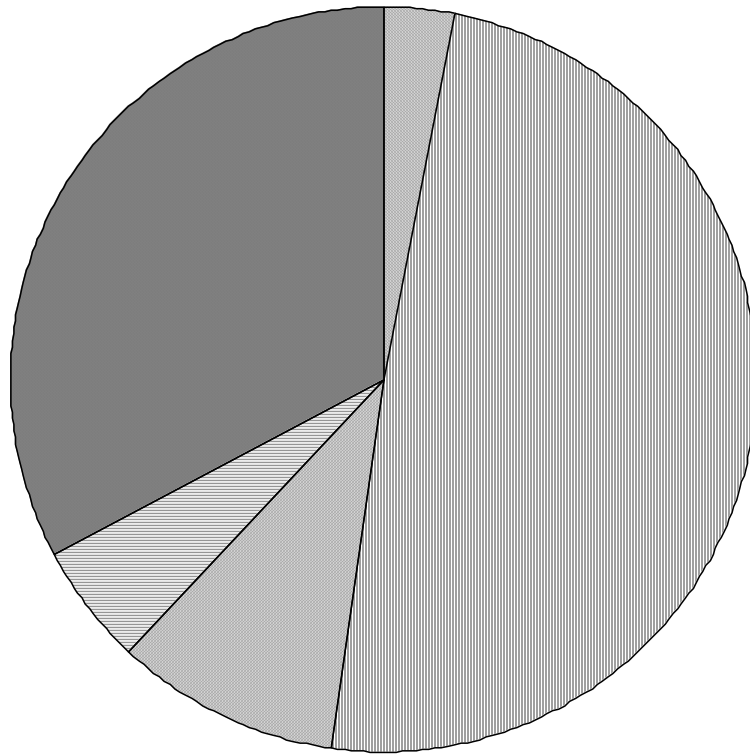
Respondent Profile



Working in play service management or play development	89
Other*	85
Involved in playwork	65
Involved in early years or childcare provision	64
Involved in parks or playgrounds	50
Not given	30
Working in regeneration	17
Working in schools	16
Working in youth work	9

**(national organisations/charities/parents/those whose remit covered more than one of the options)*

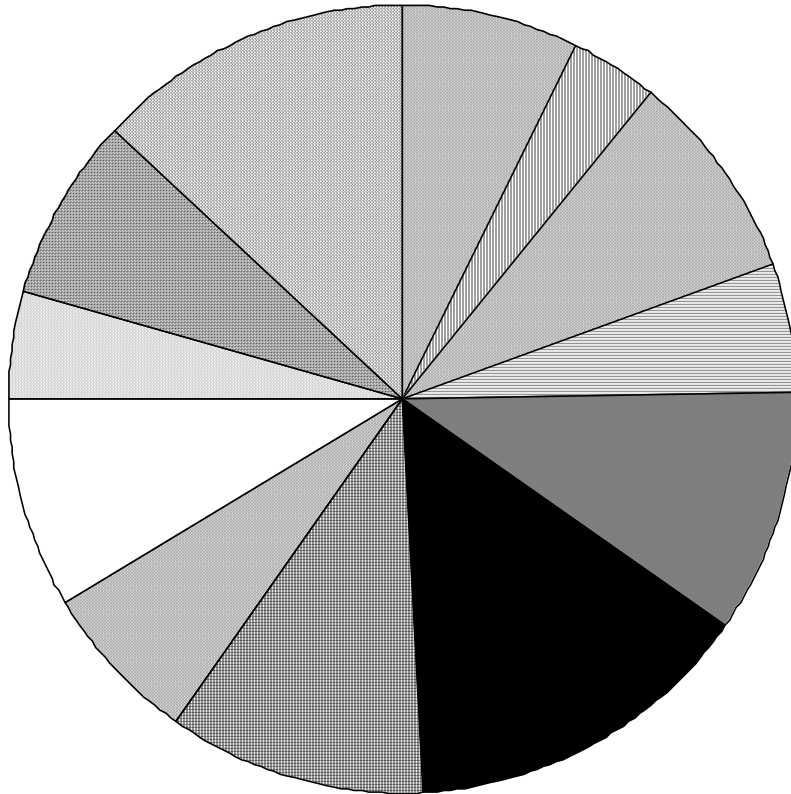
Respondent Profile: Organisation



- Another statutory sector agency
- Local Authority or partnership body
- Not given
- Private sector
- Voluntary organisation

Local Authority or partnership body	209
Voluntary organisation	139
Not given	41
Private sector	23
Another statutory sector agency	13

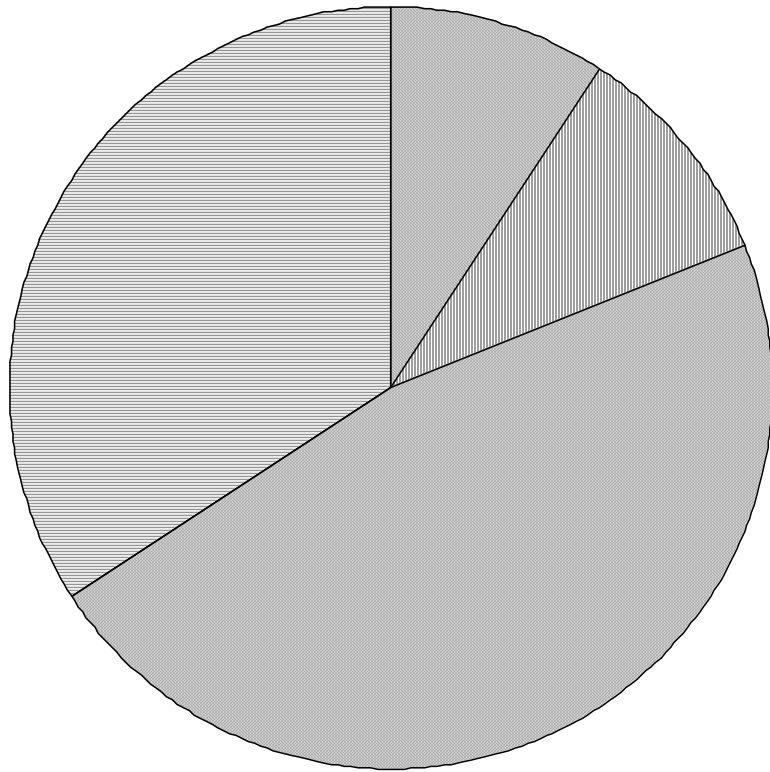
Respondent Profile: Region / Country



- England: East Midlands region
- ▨ England: Eastern region
- England: London region
- ▨ England: North East region
- England: North West region
- England: South East region
- ▨ England: South West region
- England: West Midlands region
- England: Yorkshire and the Humber region
- Northern Ireland
- Not given
- ▨ Scotland

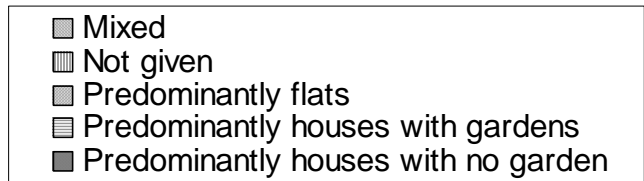
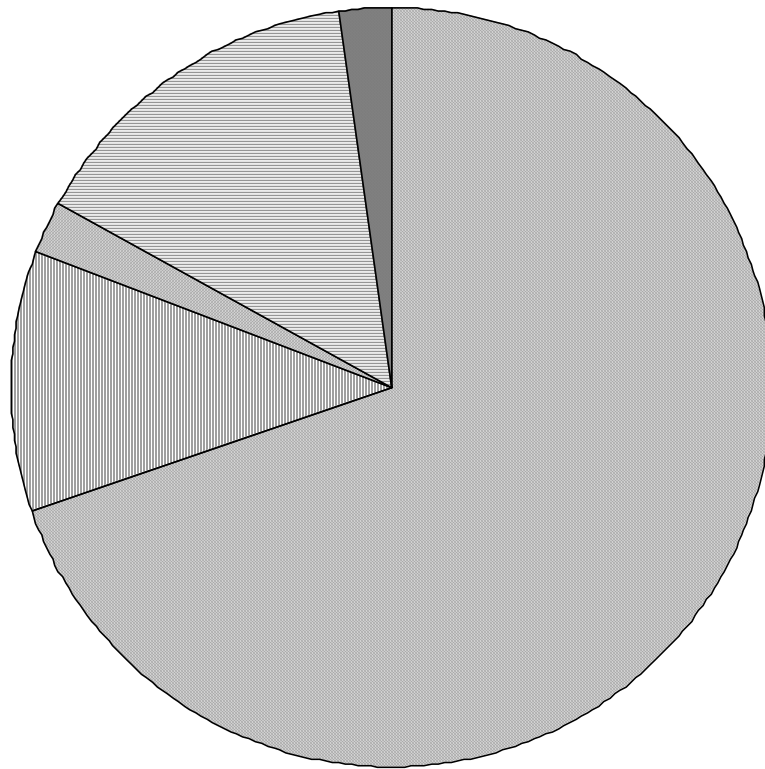
England: South East region	62
Scotland	56
England: South West region	45
England: North West region	42
England: Yorkshire and the Humber region	37
England: London region	37
England: East Midlands region	31
Not Given	31
England: West Midlands region	28
England: North East region	22
Northern Ireland	19
England: Eastern region	15

Respondent Profile: Area



Suburban/Mixed Suburban and rural	200
Urban	145
Rural	41
Not given	39

Respondent Profile: Area Description



Mixed	296
Predominantly houses with gardens	62
Not Given	48
Predominantly houses with no garden	10
Predominantly flats	9

Overview

Respondents welcomed the injection of lottery funding as a much needed boost to the play sector and the recognition of the importance of play which it signified.

Whilst the consultation was seen as an opportunity to influence how the money was spent, many felt unable to commit to a series of tickboxes or ratings asking them to choose between various options, given the varying needs of each area. A recurring theme throughout the consultation was the need for new projects to meet local need and for local communities, particularly children to be involved in determining that need.

Overall, however, the majority of respondents opted for allocating funds to supervised open access play, mostly aimed at children in a local neighbourhood and with some emphasis on innovative projects, the main considerations being safety, travel and cost.

Most respondents considered that local agencies were best placed to distribute programme funds within their area, but requested that funding was made available for all children rather than prioritising those who lived in disadvantaged areas.

Respondents thought that the programme should be led by a partnership represented by the statutory sector, primarily the local authority, the voluntary sector and community organisations. A preference for a flexible approach to bidding for capital and revenue funding was suggested and there was majority approval for commercial support.

Respondents agreed that the programme should be characterised by strategic planning, partnership working, sustainability, links to other Government initiatives and augmenting mainstream expenditure on play by local authorities. The development of play policies and strategies and multi-agency collaboration were seen as effective methods of achieving these objectives.

Respondents thought that good practice in community involvement, accessibility and design could best be achieved by talking to children about what they wanted and by publicising good examples.

Existing benchmarks, standards and quality assurance tools were generally viewed as being adequate, although a rationalisation of the many existing systems with a greater emphasis on the value of play was considered a necessity.

Respondents suggested that dedicated advisors, guidance, networking and funding would ensure that those planning and delivering projects were supported effectively.

Training was viewed as the most important way of ensuring that jobs were filled by the right people, whilst talking to children was considered the most effective means of evaluating the programme.

Respondents generally viewed the programme as providing impetus to the play sector and believed that it was vital that momentum was maintained once programme funds had expired, by keeping play on the national agenda and by encouraging local authorities to regard it as a statutory provision requiring continued mainstream funding.

Summary

Q1 Do you agree with the definitions of play and play provision given in this document?

There were 409 responses to this question.

350 (86%) respondents agreed with the definitions of play and play provision; 34 (8%) did not; 25 (6%) were not sure.

Most respondents considered that the definitions were acceptable, particularly welcoming their clarity and conciseness. However, several suggested that various other published definitions should have been considered, such as those included in:

- Best Play
- The National Standards of Playwork
- The New Charter For Childrens Play
- The Assumptions and Values of Playwork
- The Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork Charter

64 (16%) respondents believed that the essential element of fun and enjoyment was missing from the definition of play. It was accepted that whilst it was important that play supported learning and development, the definition should also reflect that play could be unstructured and requiring no outcomes. Respondents also considered that the definition could include reference to: interaction with parents or carers as part of play and the need for an element of acceptable risk in play to provide challenge.

37 (9%) respondents thought that the definition of play provision should not be considered to be exhaustive. It was noted that play in the home and street play were significant omissions, given that these represented the two places where particularly younger children and those with disabilities were most likely to play.

19 (5%) respondents considered that the definitions did not fully reflect play for disabled children. The lack of any specific reference to children with additional needs did not inspire confidence that the play review would address existing deficiencies in inclusive play provision. Respondents felt that the definitions did not relate to the play experiences of many disabled children, noting that many did not have a natural impulse to play, could not experience imaginary or physical play due to limited sensory ability or mobility and were prevented from accessing many forms of provision due to the need for trained supervision, support and transport.

Q2 What types of project do you think the programme should make a priority in your area?

There were 410 responses to this question.

Respondents rated suggestions for types of project which they considered the programme should make a priority in their area, the lowest score indicating the highest priority. The resulting 'league table' shown below reflects respondents' general opinion that programme funds should be targeted at school age children, given that early years and childcare provision had been addressed by other initiatives, such as Sure Start, and that provision in schools should primarily be the prerogative of local education authorities.

Type of Project	Aggregate score from priority ratings	Average score from priority ratings
Supervised open access play provision	690	2.1
Unsupervised outdoor play/leisure facilities	806	2.4
Other*	485	3.1
Improving play opportunities in schools	958	3.4
Improving play opportunities in childcare settings	1016	3.6
Improving play opportunities in pre-school education settings	1078	3.9

* Suggestions for other types of project which should be given priority included:

- inclusive provision
- mobile provision
- teenage provision
- holiday playschemes
- after-school clubs
- homezones/playstreets
- toy libraries
- support, development and infrastructure for projects e.g. play strategies, research, training, maintenance, design and safety

29 (7%) respondents opted for 'no priorities', believing that either there was equal need for the types of project suggested or that a prioritisation exercise was not the correct approach. 41 (10%) respondents considered that the aim of the programme should be to meet the individual needs of local areas and would depend on many factors including: gaps in existing provision, demand for particular projects and the age profile of various communities. It was thought that consultation with children and the wider community would ensure that local priorities were correctly identified and addressed.

60 (15%) respondents requested that provision for disabled children was given priority within the programme, particularly by creating opportunities for them to access mainstream play. This was considered to be vital in giving disabled children a degree of independence and spontaneity and to help build confidence and self-esteem. It was

also noted that any new provision funded by the programme would need to adhere to the statutory inclusion measures contained within the Disability Discrimination Act.

54 (13%) respondents highlighted the need for unsupervised outdoor provision. It was noted that this requirement had long gone unrecognised as 'play provision' and consequently had been underfunded at the expense of the growing demand for supervised provision such as before and after school clubs and playschemes. Respondents also acknowledged the need for children to have their own freely chosen playspace, to create their own play rather than undertake organised activities and to police themselves without adult intervention.

Conversely, 51 (12%) respondents expressed the need for safety and supervision within play provision, believing that this was essential in enabling younger children to safely access play areas without being bullied or intimidated. It was also noted that parents were more likely to let their children play in areas which were well-lit and patrolled by wardens, given their current concerns such as 'stranger danger'.

46 (11%) respondents identified teenage provision as a priority, given that many recent initiatives had concentrated on early years and childcare. 'Play' was not considered to be an appropriate term for teenagers. However, it was acknowledged that the programme could provide places for them to meet friends such as youth clubs and teen cafes or places to let off steam such as BMX tracks, skateboard/roller blade/scooter parks and all weather football and basketball facilities. Further, it was recognised that this would go some way towards reducing the problem of bored young people becoming involved in vandalism, substance abuse and crime.

33 (8%) respondents suggested extending the use of school grounds for community use outside school hours and term time. It was noted that this would be particularly helpful in rural areas, where the school was often the focal point of isolated communities and a valuable local resource. However, there was some concern that children might find it difficult to associate school with play, when it was primarily seen as a place of learning with its related constraints and rules.

23 (6%) respondents thought that mobile provision, such as playbuses and toy libraries, should be seen as a priority, given their wide accessibility from deprived inner city areas to isolated rural areas.

Q3 What are your views on the proposed approach to distributing the funding?

There were 406 responses to this question.

228 (56%) respondents agreed with the proposed approach to distributing the funding; 51 (13%) did not and 127 (31%) were not sure.

Generally, respondents agreed with the proposed approach. 126 (31%) were of the opinion that allocating funds to local agencies to deliver the programme was the best solution, given that they were well placed to know how money should be distributed within their area. It was suggested that local agencies should be represented by play

specialists, such as local authority play departments, children and young people's strategic partnerships, Children's Fund and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships.

129 (32%) respondents however did not agree with the proposal that disadvantaged areas should be given priority for funding, particularly as such areas were often eligible to a number of other funding streams and initiatives which were denied to others. Respondents were concerned that the use of standard indices, such as postcodes, for the identification of such areas, would result in pockets of disadvantage within seemingly affluent areas and rural areas being overlooked. Respondents noted that, fundamentally, play was the right of every child, whatever their background, location or social circumstances, and that as such there should be no prioritisation for funding.

33 (8%) considered that a strategic approach should be taken to the distribution of funding. It was proposed that local agencies should conduct an audit or needs analysis of play provision within each area, to identify where gaps existed and consequently map funding to the areas of greatest need. It was suggested that local authorities were best placed to conduct such an exercise, based on established programme criteria, but with some local flexibility.

25 (6%) respondents stated that local communities, particularly children, should be consulted on how funds were to be distributed within their area. It was considered that this would ensure that the programme met local needs, that the play areas provided would be used by children and would therefore prove to be sustainable.

34 (8%) respondents highlighted the need for sufficient funds to be allocated to inclusive provision, particularly to improve the opportunities for disabled children to access mainstream play. It was noted that children with disabilities came from a range of different social and economic backgrounds and whether or not they lived in recognised deprived areas, they remained a disadvantaged and marginalised group. Respondents recognised that inclusive provision brought associated costs for supervision, improved access and adaptation of play equipment, but should nonetheless be given due consideration when funding was allocated.

Q4 What emphasis should there be on projects aimed at children in a local neighbourhood, as against projects aimed at a wider catchment?

There were 399 responses to this question.

243 (61%) respondents believed there should be a strong emphasis on projects that cater for children in a local neighbourhood

39 (10%) respondents believed there should be a slight emphasis on projects that cater for children in a local neighbourhood

30 (8%) respondents believed there should be a strong emphasis on projects that cater for a wide catchment area

12 (3%) respondents believed there should be a slight emphasis on projects that cater for a wide catchment area

84 (21%) respondents were not sure.

The majority of respondents favoured greater emphasis on projects that served local neighbourhoods, although it was thought that there was also scope for a smaller proportion of showpiece facilities, perhaps catering for specialist activities, strategically placed to cater for a wider catchment area. 69 (17%) respondents considered that a mixture of projects within each area would be needed, depending on various factors such as:

- identified gaps in provision
- age profile of children
- demography
- transport networks

67 (17%) respondents identified problems with travel as reasons for focusing on local projects. Cost, inconvenience, danger of traffic and parental apathy were all cited as factors which would prevent children and families from travelling to a play area outside their local neighbourhood. It was noted that there would be financial implications if, for instance additional bus routes, walkways or supervised walking services had to be provided to enable children to reach a particular play area.

47 (12%) respondents considered that consultation should be used to determine whether the community preferred local projects or those serving a wider catchment. It was believed that this would be the most effective method of establishing preferences and of ensuring that projects had met local need.

44 (11%) respondents said that local projects were more likely to foster a sense of community spirit and ownership, which would lead to play areas being well-used, properly maintained and therefore more sustainable. It was recognised that play areas often provided a focal point within neighbourhoods where children could forge friendships and get to know local residents and where parents could meet regularly.

39 (10%) respondents believed that it was important to provide local provision to enable more children with disabilities to be able to access mainstream play areas and to mix with children within their own communities. Social integration was viewed as essential in reducing the isolation disabled children often felt, particularly those who attended special schools outside their local area and had no other means of meeting with their peers locally.

37 (9%) respondents opted for a strong emphasis on local projects, believing that this was particularly appropriate for younger children. Whilst it was acknowledged that older children had greater wherewithal to travel, without adult supervision, to play areas further afield, younger children were thought to have less opportunity and were therefore dependent on provision near their homes. Respondents were of the view that it was important for younger children to have some degree of independence, by being able to safely access and use play areas which were familiar to them, without having to be accompanied by an adult.

Respondents also highlighted mobile provision as being able to serve both local and wider catchment areas.

Q5 Which agency or body should lead the delivery of the programme at the local level?

There were 356 responses to this question.

121 (34%) respondents believed that the local authority was best placed to lead the delivery of the programme at local level. It was noted that these organisations were equipped with the infrastructure, personnel, expertise and capacity needed to deliver such a programme. They were also considered to have the advantage of a strategic overview of local developments and established means of involving the community.

97 (27%) suggested that the local authority, as part of a partnership with other agencies, such as voluntary organisations, should lead the delivery. It was felt that this would engender greater collaboration between different sectors and would act as a safeguard against local authorities focusing on their own priorities.

112 (31%) respondents thought that voluntary sector organisations should be involved, given that they would be the employers in many projects. It was also noted that voluntary groups were in touch with local needs and were unlikely to have any vested interests. Playboard and Play Scotland were suggested as voluntary bodies which could effectively deliver the programme in Northern Ireland and Scotland respectively.

29 (8%) respondents suggested that statutory sector bodies, other than local authorities, should be represented in any partnership arrangements for delivery of the programme. A variety of organisations was suggested such as the police, social services, health, education, youth and environment services.

82 (23%) respondents favoured a partnership approach, recognising that a range of bodies from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors would ensure fair representation. 69 (19%) suggested that the Early Years Development Childcare Partnerships (EYDCP) would be appropriate, given that they comprised each of these sectors and linked with Sure Start, Children's Fund and the Play Service. Regional Development Agencies, Local Strategic Partnerships and Rural Community Councils were also suggested, amongst others, as partnerships with sufficient capacity and the local perspective to be able to deliver the programme.

29 (8%) respondents suggested the Children's Fund partnership boards, given that they had the existing structures in place for the administration of funding for a national programme.

Many respondents felt that there should be adequate representation from local people. 59 (17%) said that the community, 33 (9%) said that children and 22 (6%) said that parents should all be able to contribute to the delivery of the programme to ensure that it ultimately achieved its objective of meeting local needs.

39 (11%) respondents believed that play providers, as experts in the field, had a role to play in ensuring that due consideration was given to play value and that funding was directed specifically to play provision rather than being diverted to other local priorities such as childcare. Local play councils/associations/forums and out of school networks were identified as having the relevant understanding of play.

Q6 What should be the balance between capital and revenue funding?

There were 391 responses to this question.

125 (32%) respondents said that there should be a greater emphasis on revenue finding; 110 (28%) said that there should be a greater emphasis on revenue funding and 155 (40%) were not sure.

By a small margin, respondents favoured greater emphasis on revenue funding. Whilst it was acknowledged that capital funding was vital in starting up a project, for the purchase of land, property or equipment, revenue funding was considered to be the key factor in ensuring a project's longevity, viability and popularity.

107 (27%) respondents noted that without revenue funding for maintenance, repair, insurance and inspection, projects would be unsustainable, would fall into disrepair and would no longer hold appeal for children.

75 (19%) respondents believed that revenue funding was essential for employing and training playworkers to motivate and lead children in various activities and wardens to ensure that both children and their parents felt content that play areas were safe and supervised.

19 (5%) respondents favoured greater emphasis on revenue funding from the programme, given that this type of funding was harder to access by other means. It was noted that it was easier to generate sponsorship or organise fundraising to kickstart projects or purchase equipment, yet it was more difficult to secure ongoing revenue from such sources for staffing or maintenance costs to ensure sustainability.

103 (26%) respondents believed that a balance of both capital and revenue funding was necessary for any project and that there should be flexibility in the bidding process to allow applicants to opt for either or both, depending on the particular needs of their project. It was suggested that provision was made for a higher capital requirement in the first year of a project, for start up costs such as procurement, followed by greater demand for revenue funding in subsequent years for running costs and ongoing maintenance.

Q7 Please state briefly how you think the programme can promote effective strategic planning and link with other Government initiatives

There were 296 responses to this question.

89 (30%) respondents said that the development of national and local play policies and strategies would be an important move in helping to promote effective strategic planning. It was believed that play was an area which was often neglected where strategies for other forms of statutory provision were developed routinely. Respondents said that integrating play strategies into strategies for other areas of provision such as health and education, would help to raise its profile and promote joined-up thinking. It was noted however, that there was also a risk that play could lose its identity and perhaps become hidden by being included within other strategies.

50 (17%) respondents thought that partnership working was important in bringing together organisations whose common aim was to work with children and young people. Suggestions for partners who could link with the programme included:

- Sure Start
- Children and Young People's Unit
- Children's Fund
- Connexions

Local Strategic Partnerships and EYDCPs were proposed as established bodies which had the appropriate representation to fulfil this role. Partnership working was viewed as beneficial in many ways, such as:

- ensuring coherency of planning and delivery across children's services
- effective deployment of resource
- capacity for merging funding streams
- sharing targets and indicators

42 (14%) respondents considered that the programme could promote strategic planning and links with other Government initiatives by requiring applicants to demonstrate how they would achieve this as part of their application for funding.

Respondents highlighted the following areas where the programme could link with various initiatives:

82 (28%) respondents identified early years initiatives such as Sure Start, National and Local Childcare Strategies and the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative as having important links with the play agenda, particularly for pre-school children.

76 (26%) respondents believed that the programme could link to health initiatives by encouraging more physical activity for children leading increasingly sedentary lifestyles and predisposed to obesity. It was also suggested that encouraging more children and young people into play, sport and other leisure pursuits could lead to a reduction in drug and alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy.

63 (21%) respondents considered that play should be linked to community plans such as the Sustainable Communities Plan and Neighbourhood Plans. Providing children and young people with their own space to meet with friends and join in activities was seen as a means to combat boredom and address community safety issues.

47 (16%) respondents thought that education initiatives, such as Extended Schools and plans such as School Development and Improvement Plans should link to play. It was suggested that play helped to promote literacy and lifelong learning and complemented formal education by equipping young people with life skills. Taking part in consultations was viewed as an ideal method to promote citizenship.

45 (15%) respondents thought that the programme would link well with the Children's Fund, several of whom had already established partnerships represented by the Fund. It was suggested that much could be gained from building on the work already done by the Children's Fund, such as identifying areas of need.

42 (14%) respondents identified youth offending and crime prevention initiatives as linking to play. 'Distraction' techniques where children and teenagers were involved in designing their own provision and were provided with an acceptable alternative to 'hanging around with nothing to do' were suggested as ways of promoting ownership and thereby reducing youth crime, vandalism and littering.

36 (12%) respondents believed that social inclusion issues related to play, given that the provision of play areas within local communities encouraged greater integration of children from different backgrounds, with varying abilities and of different race.

31 (10%) respondents highlighted regeneration initiatives, such as Neighbourhood Renewal, believing that new play areas would help to regenerate communities.

20 (7%) respondents stated that environmental initiatives and plans such as the Green Spaces Initiatives and Open Space Plans should link to the programme. It was proposed that local authorities should give due consideration to play area and park provision as part of its planning for housing and highways.

Respondents also identified links to youth, cultural, transport and leisure strategies and initiatives.

Q8 Please state briefly how you think the programme can effectively promote partnership working and long-term sustainability and how it can best augment mainstream expenditure on play by local authorities and other organisations

There were 259 responses to this question.

170 (63%) respondents said that the programme could promote partnership working by encouraging related agencies to work together. Those organisations mentioned in question 7 above, such as EYDCPs, Sure Start and Children's Fund, as well as voluntary groups, schools, youth/social services etc. were suggested as partners who could effectively work together to ensure the success of the programme. Many respondents said that such partnerships already existed locally and provided useful forums for sharing good practice, providing support and ensuring that funds were used effectively and inclusion issues were addressed. It was also noted that proven partnership working within projects gave credence that they were being managed effectively.

99 (37%) respondents were of the opinion that the provision of adequate resource was important for maintaining the sustainability of projects. Respondents were concerned that once NOF funding came to an end, mainstream funding would need to be sufficient to ensure the momentum of the programme and that provision created by programme funds could be sustained. It was suggested that local authorities should recognise play as a statutory service, ensuring that their planning strategies looked to the long term future of play provision and that budget commitments were made accordingly.

57 (21%) respondents considered that consultation with the local community, particularly children, would ensure the sustainability of the programme. It was believed

that involving local people in decisions about play provision within their area would engender a sense of ownership and would ensure that projects were supported and maintained.

49 (18%) respondents believed that applicants to the programme should demonstrate, as part of their bids, their intended partnership working arrangements and how they planned to sustain and finance their projects when programme funds ceased. It was noted that, if applicants had not given due consideration to these issues, funding should not be granted.

Respondents suggested that the programme could best augment mainstream expenditure on play by local authorities and other organisations by:

- conducting an audit of play provision to identify where the programme could bring additionality to existing provision
- ensuring that maximum funding was directed to services rather than support and development functions
- accessing funds from central Government, statutory agencies, benefactors and sponsors
- fundraising

Q9 Should the programme allow for commercial support for projects, for instance through sponsorship?

There were 395 responses to this question.

284 (72%) respondents considered that the programme should allow for commercial support for projects; 27 (7%) did not and 84 (21%) were not sure.

Few respondents believed that commercial sponsorship was inappropriate, 66 (17%) stating that any form of assistance, whether it be in terms of funds, goods, time, personnel or expertise would be beneficial to any project. Sponsorship was seen as advantageous in supporting the sustainability of play provision whilst helping to forge better links between private sector companies and the local community.

82 (21%) respondents however insisted that only sponsors who were considered to be ethically and morally sound and whose ethos was conducive to the provision they were sponsoring should be considered. Organisations which respondents considered to be unsuitable included those which:

- had been linked to adverse publicity, such as using child labour within the developing world
- promoted unhealthy diets for children such as fast food chains and manufacturers of sweets and sugary drinks
- were linked to products inappropriate to children such as cigarettes and alcohol

51 (13%) respondents were concerned that involving the private sector could be detrimental should businesses seek opportunities for sponsorship to make a profit, advertise, exploit children by using them to promote their products or expect an element

of control in the running of the project. It was suggested that guidance would be helpful in setting out parameters for the types and methods of sponsorship which were considered to be acceptable.

35 (9%) respondents believed that the ability to obtain sponsorship for a project should not be an essential criterion for securing funding and that it should not replace mainstream funding.

27 (7%) respondents expressed concern that it would not be easy to find sponsors for their projects. It was noted that private sector organisations were likely to opt for opportunities where they would achieve optimum publicity and that rural, isolated or dilapidated areas would be disadvantaged. Respondents also stated that sponsorship tended to be transient and that the sustainability of projects should not be reliant on what could be a short term source of income.

Q10 Please state briefly how you think the programme can support and disseminate good practice in community involvement, accessibility and design

There were 331 responses to this question.

201 (61%) respondents thought that consultation was the most important way of disseminating good practice in community involvement, accessibility and design. It was felt that listening to the views of children, particularly at the planning and design stage, involving them throughout the process and acting promptly on their input would:

- help to promote a sense of ownership and appreciation
- ensure that play areas were well used, valued and maintained
- ensure that accessibility and design issues were addressed by those who would ultimately use the provision

Suggested methods for consultation included: open meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences and roadshows.

92 (28%) respondents suggested promoting good examples of provision. Providing case studies and encouraging visits to successful projects and making awards, such as beacon status, for exemplars were suggested for this purpose.

88 (27%) respondents believed that publicity would help to communicate good practice. A website where play providers could access reports from other projects and pass on their own experiences to others was proposed, along with newsletters and publications such as 'Play Today'. Poster campaigns and competitions aimed at encouraging children to design new play areas were also suggested.

64 (19%) respondents said that guidance, such as support packs, for applicants, setting out the rules at the outset, would be essential for those planning to bid for funds. The use of consultants and advisers for specialist advice and the idea of 'play mentors' to guide and support applicants through the process were also considered to be effective means of passing on good practice.

53 (16%) respondents believed that encouraging inclusion would promote best practice for accessibility. It was proposed that applications for funding should demonstrate how play projects would be made accessible to all children, for instance by:

- involving disabled children in the design of play provision
- compliance with legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act and standards such as the NPFA's LEAP and NEAP
- targets for usage by children with disabilities and from minority ethnic groups

48 (15%) respondents considered that training was important. It was recommended that supporting volunteers to work towards playwork qualifications and ensuring that more play staff were trained to work with children with additional needs would help to promote best practice in playwork.

44 (13%) respondents stated that monitoring and evaluation of play projects would help to identify what had, and had not, been successful in order to identify and disseminate good practice and lessons learned to other projects.

50 (15%) respondents said that funding was needed to support good practice. It was acknowledged that publicity, running consultation exercises, buying in consultancy, employing architects, artists and designers, providing training and guidance, monitoring and evaluation all came at a cost and would need allocated resources.

37 (11%) respondents were of the opinion that applications for funding should outline how good community involvement, accessibility and design would be achieved. It was also suggested that applicants should agree to be used as case studies, give presentations or allow visits to their projects to disseminate best practice in these areas.

Other suggestions for supporting and disseminating good practice in community involvement, accessibility and design included:

- networking/partnerships: twinning similar projects, joint-initiatives, jobswaps
- promotion of national standards/quality assurance measures
- safety checks, technical appraisals and inspection by the appropriate bodies
- development of a Play Charter
- use of pilots
- research

Q11 What are your views on the appropriateness of existing benchmarks, standards and quality assurance tools?

There were 224 responses to this question.

49 (22%) respondents were of the opinion that existing benchmarks, standards and quality assurance tools were adequate. The following were identified as being the most useful:

- 38 (17%) said that Best Play was the benchmark generally accepted by the play sector. It was seen to be most appropriate to play and suitable for both supervised and unsupervised provision. Several respondents had used Best Play principles as a baseline for developing their own local systems.
- 25 (11%) respondents considered that First Claim, by Play Wales, was a useful self-assessment tool which was most suited to supervised provision.
- 25 (11%) respondents thought that Quality in Play, by London Play, was play-focussed and most suited to supervised provision.
- 25 (11%) respondents found the National Playing Fields Association LEAP/NEAP/LAP standards useful as a basis for equipped outdoor play, but considered that they should not be applied too prescriptively, but could be adapted for local use.
- 22 (10%) respondents had mixed views on the Ofsted Daycare Standards. Although they were considered to be widely used, it was noted that they had an early years/ childcare/education bias. It was suggested that the forthcoming review of the standards would be an opportunity to make them more play-specific.
- 13 (6%) respondents believed that it was essential that all fixed play equipment should conform to BSEN 1176/1177 standards.

Other schemes which were considered useful included:

- NOF Better Play funding criteria
- Playwork NVQ Standards
- Aim Higher
- Best Value
- Audit Commission play performance indicators
- Investors in People/Investors in Children
- Children (NI) Order
- Care Commission
- Making Sense
- Kidsactive Side by Side
- HSE report on playgrounds

35 (16%) respondents said that benchmarks, standards and quality assurance tools should be more specific to play situations. Whilst it was acknowledged that existing measures were useful in ensuring that high standards of safety and childcare were maintained, it was noted that there should be more focus on ensuring quality of play by providing play value, enjoyment and challenge. 35 (16%) believed that the development of a nationally recognised play-specific scheme, possibly by a rationalisation of existing measures, identifiable by a kite/chartermark would be useful.

48 (21%) requested that benchmarks, standards and quality assurance tools were kept simple. It was noted that there was a proliferation of schemes aiming to cover a diverse field which resulted in confusion and inconsistent application across various

types of provision. Existing measures were also seen to be bureaucratic and time-consuming.

39 (17%) respondents suggested that existing benchmarks, standards and quality assurance tools should be more realistic. Respondents said that it was difficult for small, voluntary, temporary playschemes, perhaps run by a group of parents for a few weeks during the school holidays, to maintain the required standards. It was suggested that there should be scope for adapting standards to different types of provision and according to local need. Respondents also believed that existing measures overestimated risk to children. Too heavy a focus on constrictive safety regulations, possibly as a preventative measure for liability claims, was felt to have stifled creativity and challenge in play.

Q12 Please give examples of good practice you think the play review should hear about.

Respondents suggested almost 400 examples of good practice. Examples were varied and included:

- children's involvement in the design of play areas
- play provision which actively promoted the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream play
- projects which had sought to address youth disorder and vandalism
- partnership working between various agencies and involving the local community
- play strategies, quality assurance schemes and training packages

Q13 How can the programme help ensure that those involved in planning and delivering projects at the local level get effective support?

There were 278 responses to this question.

120 (43%) respondents considered that advice and guidance were needed to support those involved in planning and delivering projects locally. Suggestions included:

- a user-friendly helpline staffed by people who had worked with children
- a panel of experienced practitioners who could be called on for advice
- an online resource centre
- toolpacks
- business advice/consultancy
- mentors/working alongside experienced people
- pre-application advice sessions

102 (37%) respondents said that networking with others in the same situation would be helpful in allowing experiences and research to be shared. Various means were suggested, including:

- seminars
- roadshows
- website
- newsletter
- discussion forum in publications such as *Play News*

89 (32%) respondents believed that funding would support planning and delivery. It was recognised that a percentage of each budget would need to be designated to development costs such as buying in expertise, providing training, consultation and networking, and that ongoing costs should also be acknowledged within the funding allocation. There was some concern that funding was not wasted on introducing new posts and tiers of management and that existing expertise within the field should be utilised as far as possible.

68 (24%) respondents requested a dedicated local/regional/area co-ordinator, possibly a Local Authority Play Development Officer, who could provide one-to-one support to guide them through the process. It was proposed that those who did not have expertise in areas such as recruitment, legal and financial matters and quality assurance could call on their local co-ordinator for advice. Respondents also believed that it would be helpful for co-ordinators to monitor their projects and provide feedback to ensure that they were on track.

50 (18%) respondents said that the provision of training would be helpful in supporting them through planning and delivery of projects. Training was seen to be necessary in areas such as project management for those planning projects and in playwork practices for those who would be delivering play services. It was also suggested that local agencies could run induction programmes to ensure that the correct procedures were followed.

17 (6%) respondents asked that the application process was kept as simple and transparent as possible, to ensure that resource was not wasted in unnecessary bureaucracy. It was suggested that application forms and supporting information should be clear, unambiguous, easily obtainable and assessed quickly, followed by prompt funding.

Q14 How should the programme ensure that any jobs created are filled by people with appropriate skills and competences?

There were 291 responses to this question.

162 (56%) respondents highlighted training as the most important factor in ensuring that jobs were filled by people with appropriate skills and competences. Employing local people as playworkers and helping them to work towards relevant qualifications by training them in the workplace was seen as a key priority.

74 (25%) respondents recognised the importance of qualifications in ensuring that the most appropriate people were recruited, acknowledging that it would also be acceptable to employ those who lacked qualifications but were willing to attain them during their period of employment.

50 (17%) respondents thought that experience was more important than paper qualifications, given the current lack of qualified playworkers within the labour market. It was noted that an ability to demonstrate the appropriate skills and competences was of more value and that on the job training to work towards a particular qualification could be offered as an alternative.

74 (25%) respondents suggested drawing up job descriptions and 39 (13%) respondents considered that person specifications would be helpful. It was proposed that those who were involved in play should assist in their compilation and that they should include a requirement for applicants to be able to demonstrate an understanding of playwork values. Another suggestion was that producing such specifications should be a criterion for bidding for programme funds.

49 (17%) respondents stipulated that effective recruitment and selection procedures, using best practice from within the field, should be established and followed. It was considered necessary to involve those with experience of playwork in selection panels. 33 (11%) said an equal opportunities policy should be integral to recruitment and selection procedures.

46 (16%) respondents were of the opinion that better pay for posts in playwork would help to improve its image and attract more applicants by encouraging people to regard it as a viable career option.

24 (8%) respondents highlighted the importance of conducting all necessary checks on people who would be working with children, including health and criminal record checks.

16 (5%) believed that there should be agreed national standards for playworkers, possibly adapted from Ofsted's daycare standards, to ensure that the safety of children within their care was maintained.

Q15 What emphasis should there be on funding innovation?

There were 384 responses to this question.

221 (58%) respondents said that there should be some emphasis on funding innovation
84 (22%) respondents said that there should be a strong emphasis;
28 (7%) respondents said that there should be no emphasis; and
53 (14%) respondents were not sure.

The majority of respondents opted for *some* emphasis on providing funding for innovative projects, 74 (19%) believing that there was scope for a mix of both new and traditional play provision. Respondents were keen that fresh concepts and creativity should not be stifled, aware that new play ideas were needed to stimulate and motivate children. However, it was also considered that the larger part of the programme fund should be allocated to more tried and tested provision. It was proposed that perhaps a small proportion of flagship, innovative projects could be funded and used as exemplars to provide new direction for the field and to prevent stagnation.

60 (16%) respondents noted that it was likely that traditional provision would see a better return for investment. Given the limited funds available, it was felt that many more smaller and more basic projects could be funded, compared to a lesser number of new, experimental projects. It was also asserted that traditional provision had the advantage of proven success and popularity with children. Several respondents advised caution, concerned that an expensive, new project which children did not use would bring adverse publicity to the programme.

58 (15%) respondents considered that the decision on how much funding should be allocated to innovative projects should be made locally. Funding was viewed primarily as helping to fill gaps in provision within each area, whether this called for basic solutions such as playgrounds and playschemes or something new. Community consultation was considered necessary to determine how funding should be allocated.

35 (9%) respondents were concerned that funding should not be dependent on applicants being able to demonstrate innovation within their bids, but that greater emphasis should be placed on quality provision and local need. Many were unsure of the definition of 'innovative' and believed that effort could be wasted in trying to come up with something new, which was neither wanted nor needed, just to attract funding. It was also noted that innovative projects by nature would, after a period of time, cease to be innovative and appear dated as fads moved on. Respondents believed that the longevity and sustainability of a project were more important considerations.

Q16 What are your views on how the programme should be evaluated?

There were 300 responses to this question.

153 (51%) respondents thought that it was most important that play provision was evaluated by children. As users, it was considered that they were best placed to give an impartial view of whether provision had met their needs. It was stressed however, that creative ways should be used to gauge their opinions, as standard questionnaires were unlikely to be the most productive way of eliciting their opinions, particularly for children with additional needs. 67 (22%) respondents identified parents and 42 (14%) identified playworkers as potential evaluators, given their direct and long term involvement in various forms of play provision.

98 (33%) respondents believed that qualitative evaluation methods were most effective. It was suggested that surveying users, residents and local agencies such as the police, schools and health workers, would ensure that evaluation showed the effects any new provision had made. Changes such as reduction in youth crime and vandalism, less child obesity and truancy and better educational attainment were viewed as reliable indicators of the benefits of improved play provision. However, there was some concern that such benefits could not specifically be attributed to better play, where other factors could be seen to have contributed. The provision of a website or comments book to compile feedback and the use of focus groups and 'mystery shoppers' were also suggested as qualitative methods of evaluation.

91 (30%) respondents considered that quantitative evaluation was important, believing that compiling data against set targets or performance indicators would provide useful

evidence on the level of success various projects had achieved. Suggestions for indicators included:

- usage/inclusion: profile by age, disability, ethnicity, including numbers from rural areas and those in danger of offending, also shown as a ratio of the total possible usage
- performance against projection – shortfall/overachievement
- reduction in youth unrest/crime/vandalism and improved community safety
- level of partnership working and links with other local initiatives or strategies
- level of community involvement and support
- level of expenditure, submission of accounts and annual reports
- value for money assessment/cost benefit analysis
- achievement against equal opportunities legislation/quality assurance measures
- number of jobs created/number of parents returning to work
- increase in choice of provision, accessibility, sustainability

79 (26%) respondents were of the opinion that evaluation should be an ongoing process and that regular monitoring was integral to it. It was felt that this would provide scope for self-evaluation by individual projects and would ensure that effective record keeping practices were established which could be used to feed into annual or half yearly reviews.

52 (17%) respondents thought that evaluation should be against a set of agreed objectives, established at the start of each project. It was suggested that this would ensure that evaluation related specifically to each project and that funding had resulted in the aim of each application being achieved.

34 (11%) respondents considered that evaluation should be carried out by an independent, external body. It was suggested that this role could be taken, on a small scale, by neighbouring projects or Local Authority Play Officers or nationally by the NOF programme, Play Scotland or the relevant Government department. It was noted that this would be useful in allowing good practice from across a range of projects to be gleaned for dissemination to others.

29 (10%) respondents identified that, whilst in the short term it would be possible to evaluate areas such as service provision and usage, it was unlikely that any longer term benefits, such as improved child health and educational achievement, would be discernable for several years. Respondents however, saw the programme as an ideal opportunity to set in place longitudinal research which would help the play sector to see the long term effects of improved play provision.

25 (8%) respondents requested that evaluation systems were kept as simple and uncomplicated as possible to prevent resource from being diverted from service provision and deterring smaller projects from applying for funding. Respondents requested that evaluation requirements should not prove to be daunting or time-consuming and that they should be appropriate to specific play projects.

Q17 Please give any other relevant comments you wish to make

There were 83 responses to this question.

Whilst welcoming an injection of funds to the play sector, 30 (36%) respondents thought there was a need to take a longer term view and make provision for sustainability once programme funds were exhausted. The need for play in a child's life was thought to be a statutory requirement, as important as education or health, and should be resourced as such. Several respondents referred to the Children's Play Council document 'Making the Case for Play', echoing its recommendation for a national strategy for play with associated mainstream funding.

41 (49%) respondents raised concerns about the elimination of risk from children's play. It was noted that the growing trend towards litigation and claims for injury and damages had resulted in the removal of equipment considered to have even the smallest potential for risk. Respondents acknowledged the need for safety and supervision but were concerned that the play environment was becoming sterile, with little opportunity for children to challenge themselves, experiment with risk or explore natural settings. It was believed that the programme should recognise this need and allow for an element of risk as long as it was assessed, minimalised and managed.

17 (20%) respondents asked that consideration was given to making the application process for funding quick, simple and uncomplicated. Several cited experiences of applying to other funding streams which were time-consuming, resource-intensive and drawn out. It was noted that smaller, local and voluntary groups had less time, resource and expertise than larger and longer established organisations and as such should not be disadvantaged by being required to compile elaborate bids.