Children and Young People –
Child-friendly planning principles and policy prompts

Embedding the rights, needs and voices of children and young people in Local Plans
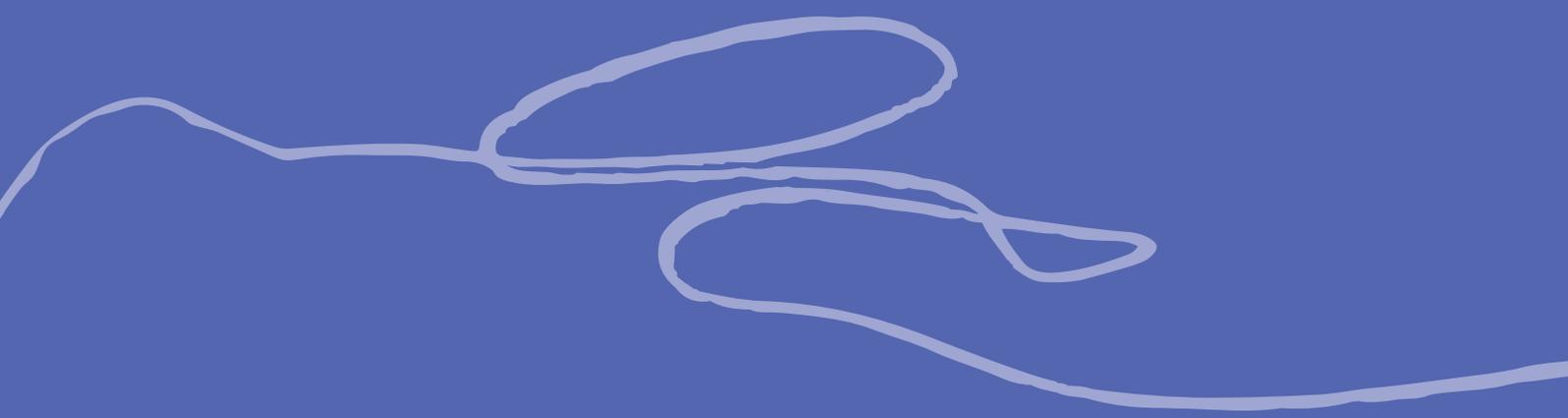
tcpa

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Contents

Introduction

This resource summarises and then details a series of strategic and thematic child-friendly principles to support the integration of children and young people's rights, needs and voices into Local Plan policy. The principles were shaped through a July 2025 co-design workshop involving expertise from planning, urban design, childhood, health and policy-making. The workshop helped to prioritise and refine the principles, test how they could be applied through the Local Plan-making process, and inform the scope and content of this resource.

The principles are designed to be practical, adaptable and relevant across a range of local authority contexts. Each principle includes an explanation, planning rationale, suggested policy area application and prompts on policy language. Suggested evidence base sources, possible monitoring indicators and delivery allies can be found in Evidence and supporting resources.

The principles include:

- Strategic child-friendly objective

- Thematic child-friendly principles

    Play – inclusive, accessible and embedded

    Autonomy and independent mobility

    Travel and wayfinding

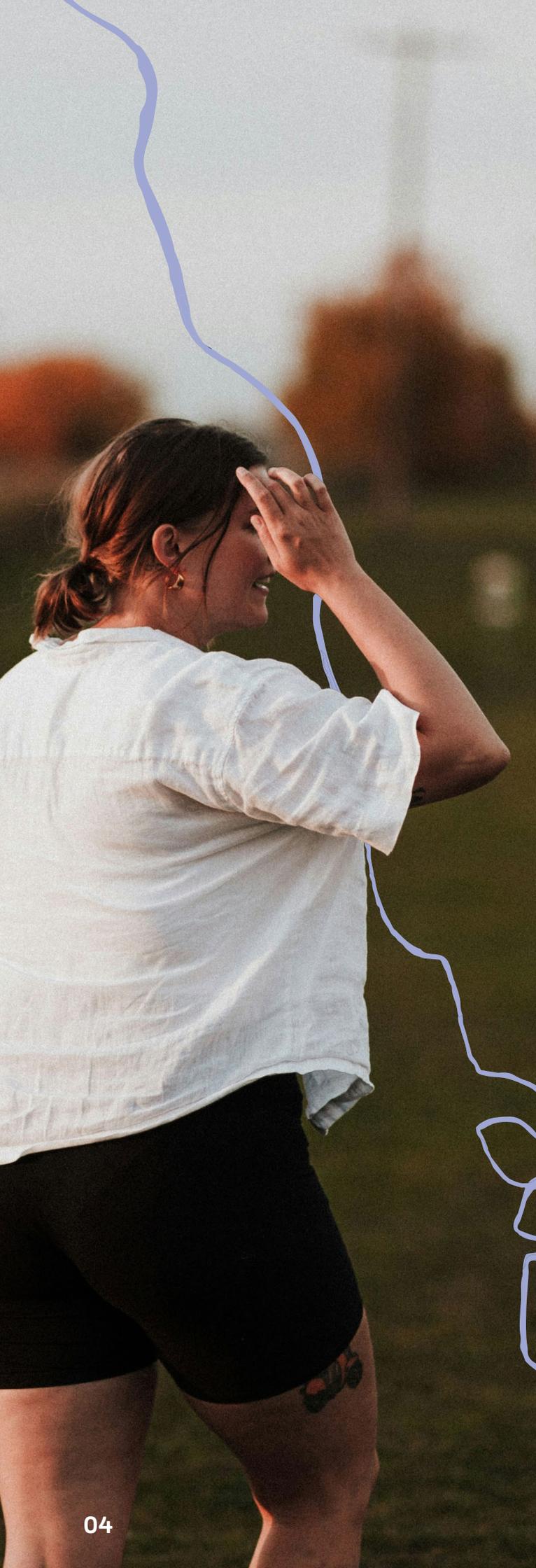   Nature, green and blue spaces

    Care, education and youth facilities

    Social infrastructure and intergenerational spaces

> Voice, and the meaningful inclusion of children and young people is a cross-cutting theme that sits within the strategic and thematic principles.

Strategic child-friendly objective

Creating child-friendly places begins with a clear and deliberate strategic objective that positions children and young people as central stakeholders in the shaping of places and the Local Plan. Strategic objectives in Local Plans are broad, overarching policies that address the overall development and use of land in an area. They are designed to highlight overall strategy and approach to ensuring high quality placemaking, and provide a clear starting point for detailed policies, sometimes known as development management policies, that are needed in the plan.

Why it matters

As part of a commitment to inclusive, healthy and equitable communities, Councils can recognise that where children and young people live profoundly shapes their life chances. Good planning can support children to be happy and healthy, able to reach their full potential and participate in community life. A strategic commitment to children's rights, needs and voices provides an anchor point that begins a 'golden thread' that runs through policies across the Local Plan.

Suggested policy wording

Strategic Objective CYP: Child-friendly places

Rights – Embedding a child rights-based approach

The Local Plan reflects the UK's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified in 1991. A child rights-based approach means planning policies are shaped with children's best interests in mind, ensuring their rights to health, development, non-discrimination, participation and play are upheld. This framing provides a legitimate basis for including child-focused planning policies and practice as part of public authorities' responsibilities under international and domestic law. It is further supported by the Equality Act 2010.

Needs – Evidence-informed planning to meet children's needs and reduce inequalities

Child-friendly planning is grounded in a recognised evidence base which demonstrates what children need from the places where they live in order to thrive. It is important to remember that children are not a homogenous group but there is evidence that provides insight into the needs of specific groups such as girls and young women and children with disabilities.

Local evidence on child and youth health and wellbeing is used in the Local Plan to target planning interventions where they are most likely to reduce inequalities and are demonstrably most needed. Incorporating a local evidence base ensures that the Local Plan does not only reflect adult concerns but actively works to support children and young people, particularly children living in poverty, with disabilities, in temporary accommodation or from marginalised groups.

Voices – Meaningful engagement with children and young people

Children and young people have unique insights into their environments but are often excluded from planning processes including the design of new developments.

Leading practice on voice means involving children and young people, including those who are seldom heard, in plan-making itself. It also means expecting proposals and planning applications to show how children and young people have been engaged proactively and ethically. This engagement should use age-appropriate methods, include proper safeguarding and, where helpful, involve trusted intermediaries so that participation is inclusive and empowering.

Strategic Objective CYP: Child-friendly place

To ensure that the rights, needs and voices of children and young people in the built and natural environment are considered and met, the Council will:

- uphold the rights of children and young people, in line with the UK's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- address the specific needs of children and young people through evidence-informed policies that create places that support their healthy development and reduce spatial and health inequalities; and

- enable children and young people to participate meaningfully in shaping the places where they grow, live, play and learn, supported by and requiring inclusive, age-appropriate engagement methods and partnerships.

Thematic child-friendly principles

Play – accessible, inclusive and embedded

Play is essential for children's development and for their physical, mental, and social health. The right to play is recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to be as fundamental as the rights to be cared for and protected from violence. This principle refers to ensuring all children and young people, regardless of age, ability, background or location, have access to opportunities and spaces for supervised and independent play. This includes formal and informal play opportunities, outdoor and indoor environments. It covers both designated play areas with high quality facilities and fixed play equipment as well as playable public and natural spaces. Play must be physically accessible, socially inclusive and located within reach of where children live and learn.

Environments should also allow for 'risky play' - play that is usually unsupervised, thrilling and involves uncertainty of outcome and a possibility of physical injury. Examples of risky play include playing at height, playing at speed, play involving impacts, play with a risk of getting lost and supervised play involving tools. Risky play allows for a child or young person to recognise and evaluate a challenge and decide on their course of action based on personal preference and self-perceived skill level. Local authorities should recognise when a design or environment is instead a hazard to a child or young person, where the potential for injury is beyond the child's capacity to recognise or manage.

Why it matters

Play is a fundamental right under Article 31 of the UNCRC and is essential for healthy physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. However, the benefits of playing out, and especially playing out close to home with minimal supervision, include and extend beyond development. Children and young people are capable and competent in contributing to their own health and wellbeing and to community life. Benefits for health and wellbeing include: when children can play out, they build an intimate knowledge of neighbourhoods, a sense of belonging and place attachment; they are physically active, often engaging in risk taking, bring benefits physical and mental health and building the capacity to cope with uncertainty; the decline in playing out has been linked to the rise in psychopathology; and where children play out there are stronger social connections amongst adults too, as well as intergenerational connections (children as 'social glue'). Yet access to space to play remains highly uneven—particularly for disabled children, girls, teenagers and those living in high-density or deprived neighbourhoods. Opportunities for risky play provide physical and mental health benefits including increased activity levels, improved movement skills, bolstered resilience and confidence and problem-solving abilities. Socially and emotionally, risky play fosters cooperation, communication and a sense of belonging, as children learn to assess risk and navigate challenges independently.

Planning policy has a vital role in ensuring that play is not an afterthought. Designated play space, doorstep opportunities, shared open space and playable streets and landscapes can all contribute to a rich and inclusive play environment, improving individual and community health and wellbeing.

Policy areas where this principle applies, considerations and policy wording prompts

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Homes and neighbourhoods	Does new housing provide accessible, overlooked doorstep play and communal space that is welcoming to children and young people? Is play provision suitable for different ages? Do homes provide private or communal intergenerational amenity space for use by children and young people?	"New residential developments must provide accessible and age-appropriate informal doorstep play opportunities as well as play areas within walking distance of all homes." "Play must be a fundamental principle in all neighbourhood design."
Movement, active travel and connectivity	Are walking and cycling routes integrated with playable features, space or opportunities to pause, explore and 'play on the way'?	"Streets and routes should include incidental, safe opportunities for play, especially in street environments and on routes to community destinations including schools and neighbourhood centres."
High quality design and place-shaping	Are play elements integrated into open space and public realm design, using inclusive and creative approaches beyond standard equipment? Where equipment is provided, is it open to use by different age groups including teenagers and adults, and inclusive in design for children and adults with disabilities?	"Designs must incorporate playable elements throughout the public realm, not just in formal play areas." "The provision of play equipment must consider the needs of children and adults and be inclusive and accessible." "Where new spaces and facilities for children and young people are proposed, the Council will expect children and young people to have been meaningfully involved in the designs proposed."
Promoting health and wellbeing	Is play recognised as a fundamental pillar of design for health and wellbeing?	"Development should appropriately respond to play as a critical component of child wellbeing, linked to active lifestyles and improved mental health."

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Parks, green infrastructure and the natural environment	Does any proposed green infrastructure and/or green space offer natural play opportunities that are safe, inclusive and accessible to children and young people? Are spaces designed for year-round use and has their long-term stewardship been considered? Do spaces provide 'loose parts' (movable, open-ended materials like logs, barrels, tyres, and natural items that offer children opportunities for risky play, such as climbing, balancing and creative experimentation)?	"Access to nature and natural play opportunities must be included in development." "Accessible, inclusive and well-located play opportunities should be provided within all parks and multifunctional green spaces." "Parks should provide opportunities for play with loose parts and natural elements that encourage imaginative and risky play."
Social and community infrastructure	Does the design of facilities such as schools, early years settings, youth centres, sports facilities and libraries support open access to play facilities and space outside of operating hours?	"Design of community infrastructure, including care and education facilities should enable flexible, inclusive use of play facilities beyond normal operational hours where appropriate."
Public realm and community safety	Does the design of the public realm support play as a legitimate use of public space? Are children safe and welcome in shared spaces, with passive surveillance and limited traffic? Are design opportunities taken to support social neighbourhood safety, encouraging people to be out and about and making connections through consideration of lighting, casual oversight of public spaces etc.?	"Public realm design should ensure that children feel safe and welcome to play, protected from traffic and vehicles, with high levels of passive surveillance in public spaces."
Climate change - adaptation	Are play spaces designed for resilience to overheating, flooding and extreme weather? Do they offer shade, water play, and nature-based cooling? Has play been integrated into climate adaptation and resilience infrastructure, such as sustainable draining schemes?	"Play provision should include climate-resilient features such as shade, permeable surfaces, planting, and access to water to ensure year-round usability and comfort."

Autonomy and independent mobility

Children and young people should be able to move around their neighbourhoods and communities safely, confidently and with a degree of freedom—whether independently, with peers or accompanied by a care-giver or another adult. This includes walking, cycling, scooting and using public transport. It does not mean all children should travel alone, but rather that the environment supports age-appropriate freedom of movement and fosters confidence and spatial agency. Children and young people should also feel welcome in public spaces and on public transport and not face discrimination due to their age.

Why it matters

Children's ability to navigate their environments shapes how they experience life, access opportunities, build confidence and develop independence into adulthood. Research links independent mobility with increased physical activity, resilience, mental wellbeing and a sense of belonging. However, car-dominated street environments, high levels of traffic and high vehicle speeds, pavement parking and exclusionary public space design and signage have starkly reduced children's everyday movements.

Promoting autonomy does not mean assuming all children can or want to travel alone. The aim is to create environments that offer genuine choice and support all children to move through their neighbourhoods with confidence and a sense of welcome and belonging. Inclusive mobility supports disabled children, children from minority communities and those in low-income areas who may rely more on walking or public transport.

Policy areas where this principle applies, considerations and policy wording prompts

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Homes and neighbourhoods	Does the layout support direct, safe and welcoming movement for children from their homes to key destinations (e.g. schools, parks)? Is there doorstep access to play and informal gathering spaces, free from cars?	"Neighbourhood layouts must enable children to safely move between home, play and key destinations without reliance on motor vehicles." "Street and neighbourhood layouts must provide safe, car-free space for informal play and gathering."
Movement, active travel and connectivity	Is there explicit consideration in proposals of children as the most vulnerable of pedestrians? Do proposals consider the mobility needs of all children and young people, including those experiencing disability, who are neurodiverse and/or with special educational needs? Are walking, cycling, scooting and wheeling routes designed to be safe, legible, and appropriate for children's independent or accompanied use? Are barriers (e.g. roads) and connection points between modes appropriately addressed? Have opportunities for play-on-the-way features been incorporated into designs?	"Proposals must demonstrate how active travel infrastructure enables age-appropriate, independent movement for children and young people, including those with additional needs." "Development must provide suitable pushchair, cycle and scooter parking facilities capable to securing child-sized vehicles."
High quality design and place-shaping	Are permeability, visibility, and child-scaled elements (e.g. wayfinding, crossings, surface materials) integrated into masterplans and street design?	"Street networks should be designed with permeability and clear sightlines to support confidence and safety for younger users."

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Promoting health and wellbeing	Does the plan encourage everyday physical activity through design that supports play near homes, independent travel to school and neighbourhood destinations?	"Development must provide safe, suitable doorstep space for physical activity and play in proximity to homes." "Developments must enable children to travel actively and independently as part of daily routines to promote physical and mental health."
Parks, green infrastructure and the natural environment	Does development offer or support access to different scales of green infrastructure, nature and open spaces (from street trees through to large parks)? Are parks, playing fields and other green spaces, and routes to them, safely accessible without adult escort? Is the toddling/walking/scooting/cycling network child-friendly and connected to open spaces and natural assets?	"Development must offer and support access to green infrastructure and nature at appropriate scales." "Access routes to green spaces must be designed for safe and independent child access from nearby homes and schools."
Social and community infrastructure	Are schools, libraries, youth centres and other key destinations for children and young people linked by signed, safe, direct and inclusive travel routes?	"Community facilities and infrastructure should be accessible to children and young people by foot, bike or scooter via safe and legible routes, and provide appropriate and secure cycle, scooter and pushchair parking."
Public realm and community safety	Is the public realm designed with natural surveillance, lighting and user comfort in mind—particularly from a child's perspective?	"Public realm development must prioritise safety and confidence for children's independent use, including lighting, sightlines and informal meeting spaces."
Climate change - adaptation	Are travel environments designed to protect children from heat, air pollution and flood risk? Do routes incorporate shade, greenery and cooling materials?	"Walking and cycling routes for children and young must be designed to support climate resilience, including shaded paths, tree-lined streets and surface water management."

Child-friendly travel routes and wayfinding

The design of transport routes and wayfinding systems should be safe, legible and inclusive for children and young people. Thought should be given to movement types including walking with a pram or pushchair, toddling, children walking with adults and peers, cycling, scooting, wheeling and public transport. The mobility patterns and needs of children and young people are distinctive from other groups. They tend to traverse smaller geographical areas and frequent routes to key everyday facilities such as schools, parks and neighbourhood centres. Children's homes need to be well connected to the places they tend to go.

Routes can also be designed to be appealing and valuable through innovative SUDs (sustainable urban drainage), planting and play features.

Child-friendly wayfinding means creating environments that are easy to understand and navigate, using visual cues, landmarks and intuitive layouts, not just written signs that give children and young people a sense of safety and confidence in the environment.

Why it matters

Care-givers, children and young people rely heavily on active and public transport modes often as pedestrians, cyclists and bus users, and they are the most vulnerable users in the environment. Their travel patterns are shaped by school, play, family responsibilities and peer interactions. Poorly designed routes, traffic danger, unclear signage and unwelcoming public spaces restrict their movement and independence.

Legible and inviting travel environments enable children and young people to access services, social spaces and learning opportunities more safely and confidently. It also empowers adults and care-givers to feel confident that it is safe for their children and young people to get around independently. Getting streets and travel route right supports broader policy aims related to active travel, education, social inclusion, air pollution and public health and addresses inequalities, especially for those who may not have access to private vehicles.

Policy areas where this principle applies, considerations and policy wording prompts

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Homes and neighbourhoods	Are there clear, safe and direct routes from homes to schools, parks, and other everyday destinations?	"Neighbourhood layouts must provide safe, legible and convenient routes for children and young people to walk, cycle or scoot to key destinations."
Movement, active travel and connectivity	Are pedestrian and cycling networks designed from a child's point of view, with age-appropriate crossings, sightlines and sensory cues? Are any cycle lanes separate from the highway and moving traffic and designed to avoid inappropriate parking?	"Active travel routes should be designed for children's safety and understanding, with features such as safe crossings, consistent surface materials and child-friendly signage." "All cycles lanes and active travel routes must be separate from the highway and protected from inappropriate waiting, loading, and parking by vehicles."
High quality design and place-shaping	Are wayfinding and spatial design strategies intuitive for non-drivers, including those with limited reading ability?	"Development proposals should demonstrate how street layouts and wayfinding strategies enable independent navigation by children of different ages and abilities."
Promoting health and wellbeing	Are safe and engaging travel routes promoted as a public health priority, supporting movement and reduced reliance on car trips?	"Developments should be designed to prioritise safe, walkable environments for children as part of broader health and wellbeing objectives to increase physical activity levels."
Parks, green infrastructure and the natural environment	Are green corridors and nature routes used to enhance walkability and wayfinding to parks and open spaces? Are travel routes shaded and sheltered by appropriate planting and street trees? Does the planting add value and interest to the route e.g. edible routes, sensory opportunities? Are opportunities to increase the appeal of routes to families and children included in designs e.g. through SUDs, play on the way?	"Green routes should be designed to offer safe and appealing travel for children, with clear paths linking homes to local green spaces." "Appropriate planting must be used to shade and shelter travel routes to aid comfort and a sense of safety." "Opportunities should be taken to increase the appeal and value of routes through planting and treatments that add interest through e.g. edible routes, SUDs and play on the way."

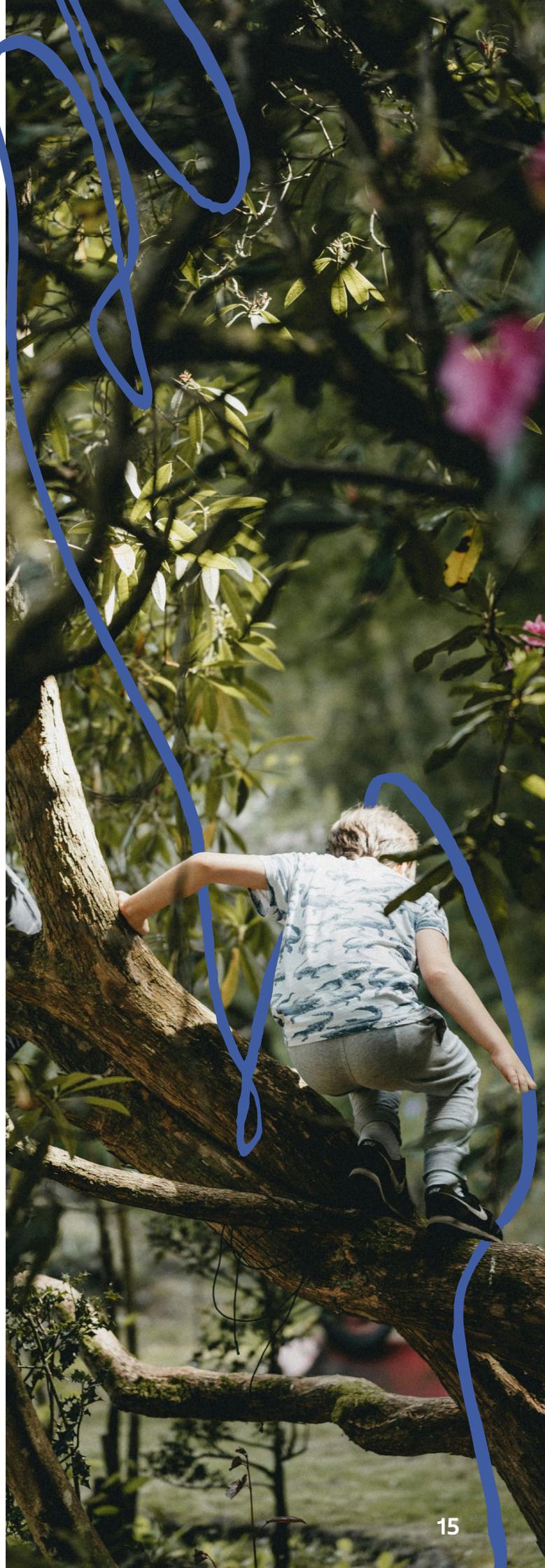| Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Social and community infrastructure	Are community and education settings linked via child-friendly travel routes that support safe and equitable access?	"All schools, early years and community settings should be served by child-friendly active travel routes, where possible with continuous pavements and where necessary age-appropriate street crossings and wayfinding."
Public realm and community safety	Is the public realm designed to support visibility, comfort, and predictability from a child's perspective, reducing fear and barriers to movement?	"Wayfinding and public realm design should reduce anxiety and increase confidence for children moving independently through the environment."
Climate change - adaptation	Do routes and wayfinding systems accommodate climate-related disruptions? Are navigation features still usable during low visibility, extreme heat or heavy rain?	"Wayfinding strategies should include resilient design features that remain legible and accessible to CYP under extreme weather conditions." "Routes must be supported by features that provide, shade, shelter, rest and other active travel support infrastructure such as water fountains."

Nature, green and blue space

Children and young people want and need access to, and time in, nature and green and blue spaces. Nature and green spaces include parks, school playgrounds, woodlands, street trees, nature corridors, private and communal gardens and informal natural environments. For children and young people these need to be close to where they live, learn and play. Children need both physical access to spaces, as well as the ability to engage meaningfully with nature in daily life.
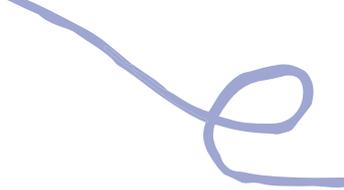
Why it matters

Access to green space and nature is vital for children's physical and mental health, cognitive development, social connection and environmental awareness. Evidence shows that frequent contact with natural environments improves mood, attention, sleep and activity levels in children. Yet access is often unequal, limited by traffic, housing density, fear of crime and lack of age-appropriate or inclusive design.

Well-located and welcoming green infrastructure provides critical space for play, rest, exploration and intergenerational interaction. It also supports climate resilience, mitigating over-heating, air pollution and flooding, all of which disproportionately affect children. Planning policy can ensure that every child grows up within safe, walkable distance of high-quality green space and with access to nature.

Policy areas where this principle applies, considerations and policy wording prompts

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Homes and neighbourhoods	Are homes located near safe, age-appropriate green space? Do layouts connect children and young to nature via a network of green routes and planted spaces? Do homes have sufficient private and shared gardens and private amenity spaces?	"All new homes must be within safe, walkable distance of inclusive green space suitable for daily use by children and young people." "All new homes must have access to private or communal private amenity space suitably designed for children and young people to spend time in, play in and engage with."
Movement, active travel and connectivity	Do walking and cycling networks connect children safely to green spaces, without the need for reliance on car access?	"Active travel routes should provide safe and direct access to parks, nature corridors and other green infrastructure for children and families."
High quality design and place-shaping	Does the design of green spaces incorporate the needs of children and young people, thinking about access, scale, features, risk and safety? Are green and natural elements (trees, planting, sensory environments) embedded in public realm design to support everyday contact with nature?	"Green and blue infrastructure developments must consider the needs of children and young people in terms of access, scale, features, risk and safety." "Public realm development must integrate opportunities for children to interact with nature throughout their daily lives."
Promoting health and wellbeing	Are natural environments used in development to support physical activity, mental wellbeing and stress reduction for children and young people?	"Development proposals must promote and support access to nature and green space as a health-enabling and health-protecting resource for children and young people."

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Parks, green infrastructure and the natural environment	Are parks and natural spaces designed with children and young people in mind—safe, welcoming, playable and biodiverse? Do they reflect the needs of different age groups and physical and cognitive abilities? Including spaces of refuge and resetting? Are there appropriate plans for the long-term maintenance and stewardship of parks and green infrastructure? Do these involve children and young people?	"Green infrastructure must include accessible, high-quality and inclusive spaces for children's play, rest and exploration." "Natural play opportunities should be included in park designs." "Development proposals must include details of appropriate long-term maintenance and stewardship of parks and green infrastructure, and encourage involvement of children and young people in these structures." "Children and young people should be actively involved in the design and development of all new parks and open spaces."
Social and community infrastructure	Are early years, schools and youth settings in proximity to nature and open access to green space? Are education and community facilities designed with appropriate space for outdoor play and learning?	"Care, education and youth facilities should provide access to nature and opportunities for outdoor play and learning." "Education and community facilities should provide and be in proximity to opportunities for children to access nature and open space."
Public realm and community safety	Are green spaces and planted areas designed to feel safe and inviting, with passive surveillance and clear access?	"Green spaces should be designed for visibility, comfort and ease of access to ensure children and young people feel welcome and secure."
Climate change – adaptation	Do green and blue spaces reduce urban heat, manage flood risk and improve air quality in areas where children and young live and play?	"Green and blue infrastructure should be designed to enhance climate resilience while also supporting child-friendly access, comfort and play especially considering shade and access to water play."

Care, education and youth facilities

Care, early years, schools and youth facilities are key locations and daily experiences for children, young people and their families and care-givers. These facilities form part of the social and spatial fabric of neighbourhoods. Attention should be paid to walkable, car-free access, integration with local services, and the role of these settings as shared community assets.

Why it matters

Early years, schools and youth settings including post-16 provision are central to children and young people's everyday lives. Their location, accessibility and relationship to the wider neighbourhood significantly shape children's independence, health and opportunities for learning and play. Proximity supports active travel, community cohesion and parental participation.

Challenges arise in rural areas where longer travel distances are common and for older children, where secondary and post-16 provision may be more dispersed. Early years settings are often privately run, which can reduce integration with planning strategies. Despite this, Local Plans have a role in supporting equitable provision, enabling multi-use of sites and promoting access for all children, particularly those experiencing disadvantage.

Policy areas where this principle applies, considerations and policy wording prompts

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Homes and neighbourhoods	Are schools and early years settings located near family housing? Are facilities accessible to all tenures and housing types?	"New housing must be planned with access to early years and school provision within safe, walkable distances, considering the needs of children of different ages and abilities and their care-givers."
Movement, active travel and connectivity	Are routes to school and early years settings walkable, car-free and inclusive? In new development are public transport connectivity and interchanges considered for older children, teenagers and care-givers especially to key education destinations?	"Education and childcare settings must be accessible via active and sustainable modes, with safe, car-free routes prioritised." "To support active travel, education and childcare settings must provide suitable and secure pushchair, cycle and scooter parking and consider providing shelter and shade for care-givers waiting to collect children." "Public transport interchanges and routes must connect with neighbourhood active travel infrastructure and provide safe, accessible routes for children and young people accessing key destinations further from home."
High quality design and place-shaping	Are education sites embedded into the neighbourhood layouts with clear pedestrian routes, front-facing buildings and pedestrian only access points?	"The design of school and early years sites should integrate with surrounding neighbourhoods, with pedestrian priority and accessible car-free entrances." "Children and young people should be engaged with to influence designs for new education sites."
Promoting health and wellbeing	Are school and nursery sites designed to support outdoor activity, healthy eating, air quality and safe access?	"New education settings must contribute to healthier neighbourhoods through outdoor space, active travel access and safe, low-emission environments."

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Parks, green infrastructure and the natural environment	Are there green connections between schools and nature? Do school grounds contribute to local open space, green infrastructure and play networks?	"Schools and early years settings should provide green space or connect to wider green infrastructure for play, rest and outdoor learning." "Settings should be designed to allow access to playgrounds and open areas outside of core operation hours."
Social and community infrastructure	Do schools and early years settings act as community hubs offering extended hours, shared use and wraparound services? Is there provision for older children and young people in proposals?	"Education and early years facilities should be designed and located to support community use beyond core hours, especially in underserved areas." "Proposals need to consider the need for community infrastructure that meets the needs of older children and young people."
Public realm and community safety	Is the area around schools welcoming, safe and easy to navigate for children and young people? Is pick-up/drop-off managed to protect children from vehicles, prioritising safety and social interaction?	"The public realm around education settings must be designed to prioritise child safety, reduce vehicle conflict, inappropriate parking and support social space for families." "Designs for new facilities must consider the transition spaces around the sites in terms of how welcoming, safe, fun and easy they are to navigate for children and young people."
Climate change – adaptation	Are school and early years sites designed for thermal comfort, passive cooling and protection from overheating or poor air quality? Are playgrounds shaded and appropriately designed to deal with surface water?	"Education and care facilities must incorporate design features that protect children from climate-related risks, including overheating and air pollution." "Planting features should be used to shade buildings and playgrounds for year round use."

Social infrastructure and intergenerational spaces

Inclusive, accessible and multi-functional social infrastructure serves children and young people alongside other age groups and demographics. Social infrastructure includes libraries, community centres, leisure and sporting facilities, health services, parks and cultural venues. These places and spaces enable interaction, learning, care, creativity and support. Intergenerational spaces are those designed to be welcoming and usable across age ranges, fostering social connection and mutual respect.
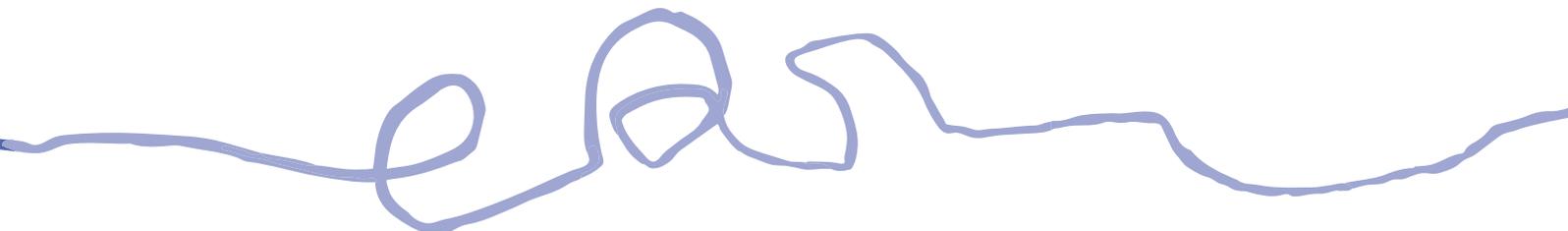
Why it matters

Children and young people benefit from having access to safe, sociable places beyond home and school—particularly spaces that are welcoming to them and offer opportunities to participate, relax and connect. Yet many public and community spaces are either designed for adults or exclude teenagers through restrictive rules, lack of provision, or poor design.

Integrated, intergenerational and youth-inclusive infrastructure supports mental health, educational enrichment, social development and community cohesion. It is particularly important for children in areas of deprivation or without access to private space or structured activities. Planning can ensure these spaces are available, visible, and embedded in local growth and regeneration strategies.

Policy areas where this principle applies, considerations and policy wording prompts

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Homes and neighbourhoods	Are new neighbourhoods supported by nearby social infrastructure suitable for all age groups, including children and young people?	"New neighbourhoods must provide and make available social and community facilities that are inclusive of children, young people and families and co-located for ease of access." "Where a development includes communal spaces and gardens, proposals must demonstrate consideration of how these spaces are shared between people of different ages."
Movement, active travel and connectivity	Are youth- and family-serving facilities easily and safely accessible without a car? Are they integrated into everyday routes?	"Community infrastructure should be located on active travel routes and accessible to children and young people on foot, wheeling, cycling or public transport."
High quality design and place-shaping	Are community buildings and spaces designed to be inclusive, flexible and sociable for different age groups to use together or alongside each other?	"Design of community buildings and spaces should support intergenerational use, with attention to comfort, accessibility and informal gathering."
Promoting health and wellbeing	Do social infrastructure policies support children and young people's wellbeing—through youth services, mental health hubs and inclusive spaces for activity and connection?	"Social infrastructure provision must address the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people, including safe spaces for socialising, support and leisure."

Policy area	Points to consider	Policy wording prompts
Parks, green infrastructure and the natural environment	Are social infrastructure buildings connected to outdoor environments? Are there shared indoor/outdoor areas for informal use and events?	"Social infrastructure should be co-located with green space where possible to support flexible, outdoor-oriented activities for all ages."
Social and community infrastructure	Are facilities sized, located and designed to serve children and young people alongside adults? Is co-location with services (e.g. health, advice, youth support) considered?	"Provision of new community facilities must include age-inclusive design and space for services used by children and young people, including youth support."
Public realm and community safety	Are children and young people welcome in shared spaces, with design and management approaches that avoid exclusion or surveillance-heavy tactics?	"Community infrastructure should be surrounded by inclusive, safe and welcoming public realm that supports access and informal gathering for children and young people."
Climate change - adaptation	Are community spaces climate-resilient with the needs of vulnerable users like children and young people factored into designs? Do shared buildings provide cool refuges/warm hubs or function during climate emergencies for communities?	"Children, young people and older people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Community spaces should be designed with the needs of vulnerable community members in mind." "Social infrastructure should be designed or adapted to serve as inclusive, climate-resilient community hubs, accessible and safe for children and young people in extreme weather."