

# Play in Wandsworth

Ensuring access for all children and families to exciting, inclusive play opportunities



## Executive Summary

Play is crucial for both children and adults in healthy development, well-being, and relationship building. Through play, children can explore their surroundings, develop problem-solving skills and enhance their creativity. Play means children can have fun, be themselves, learn, develop, and make friends. Play also strengthens the bonds between both families and communities.

In recent years, the opportunities for play have diminished. The pandemic caused children and families to lose access to spaces and opportunities for play and socialising. The cost-of-living crisis has also had a major impact, with many families unable to afford travel and/or costly activities.

We want to put play at the top of **everyone's** agenda. We want Wandsworth to be the best place to grow up, a place where **everyone** values play as a life-enriching experience for **all** our children and young people.

We want to raise awareness about its importance, working with **our partners** to ensure every child in the borough has access to exciting and inclusive play opportunities in their local area. **We will make 2025 the year of play.**

We will focus on three key areas to ensure that Wandsworth is the best place for play: **People at Play, Communities at Play and Environments for Play.** We have carried out an **initial consultation** and audit of play facilities to start shaping our plans.

We recommend the Executive endorses **our approach to play** and note the work to date in driving forward our vision.

# Why Is Play Important?

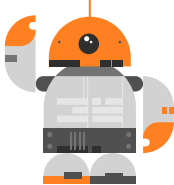
Connects people

Builds resilience & adaptability

Inspires creativity



Improves communication, vocabulary and language



Encourages Imagination



Develops independence



Develops social & cognitive skills

Better emotional growth & regulation

Promotes inclusivity



Builds confidence

Builds relationships and helps to make friends



Better physical & mental health



Enables risk-taking & develops problem-solving skills

Strengthens family bonds

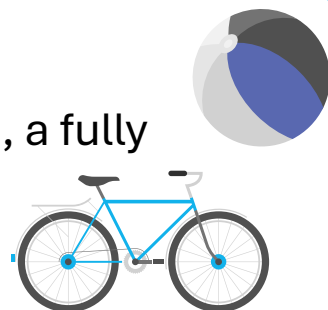
PLAY IS FUN!

# Our Play Spaces

In early 2024, we carried out an audit of existing play spaces within the borough and found that Wandsworth has...

## 76 Play Areas

- 51 playgrounds (including Lady Allen, a fully inclusive adventure playground)
- 2 skateparks
- 9 ball game areas
- 14 trim trails / outdoor gyms / play features



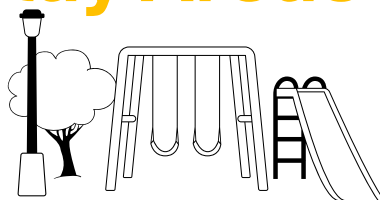
## 50 indoor play spaces

- 5 leisure centres offering indoor play
- 11 children's centres & family hubs
- 33 youth clubs (council-run and VCS)
- 1 mobile outreach youth service



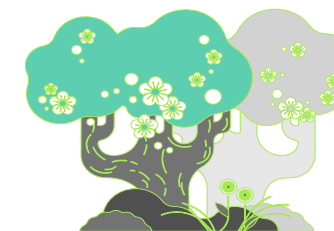
## 129 Housing Estate Play Areas

- 91 playgrounds
- 36 ball game areas
- 2 trim trails / outdoor gyms



## 46 Green Spaces

- 36 public parks or gardens
- 2 playing fields
- 8 amenity green spaces

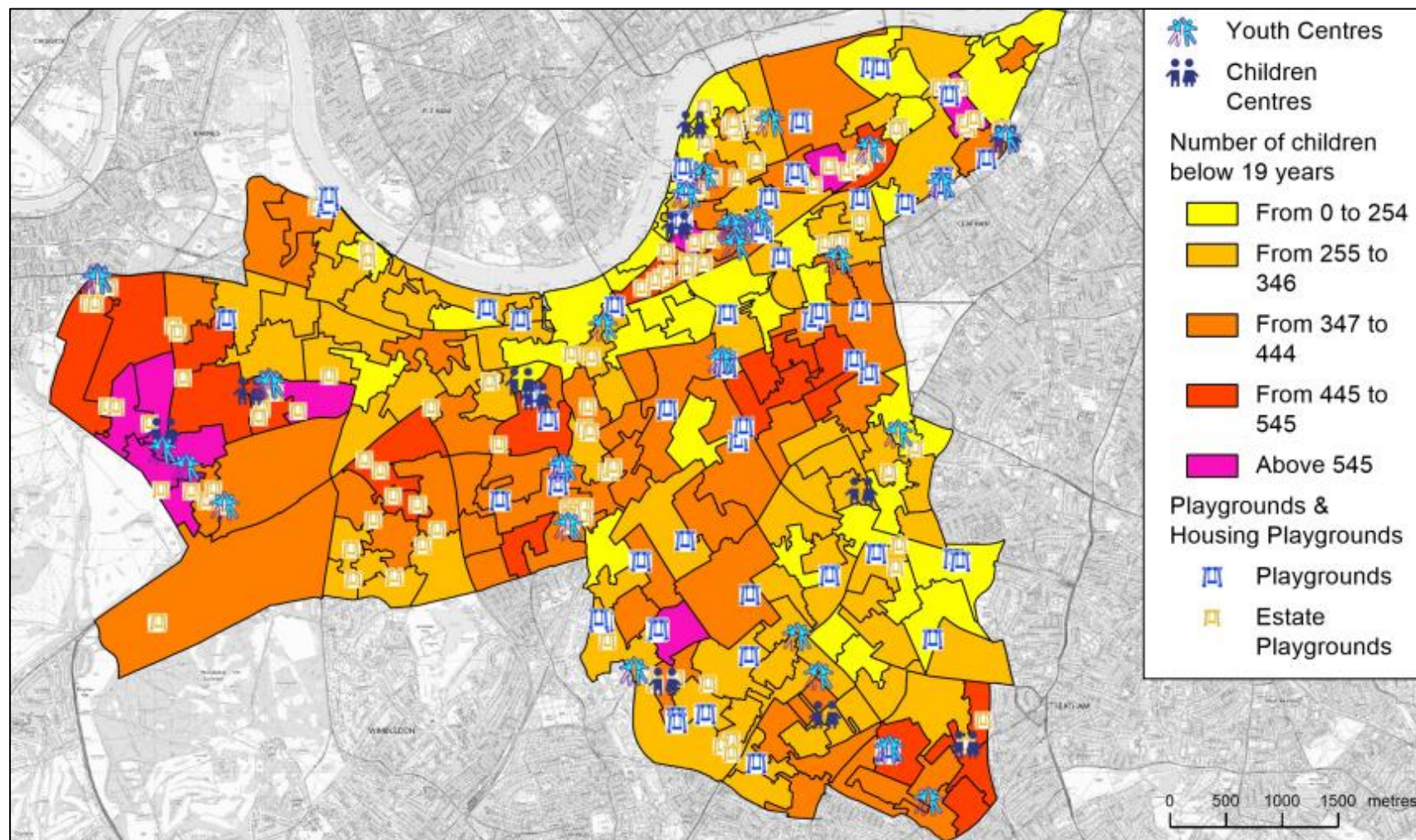




# Map of Wandsworth Play Spaces

(CYP population)

This map shows the number of children and young people (CYP) across the borough in comparison to play spaces, with Roehampton being the most densely populated area.

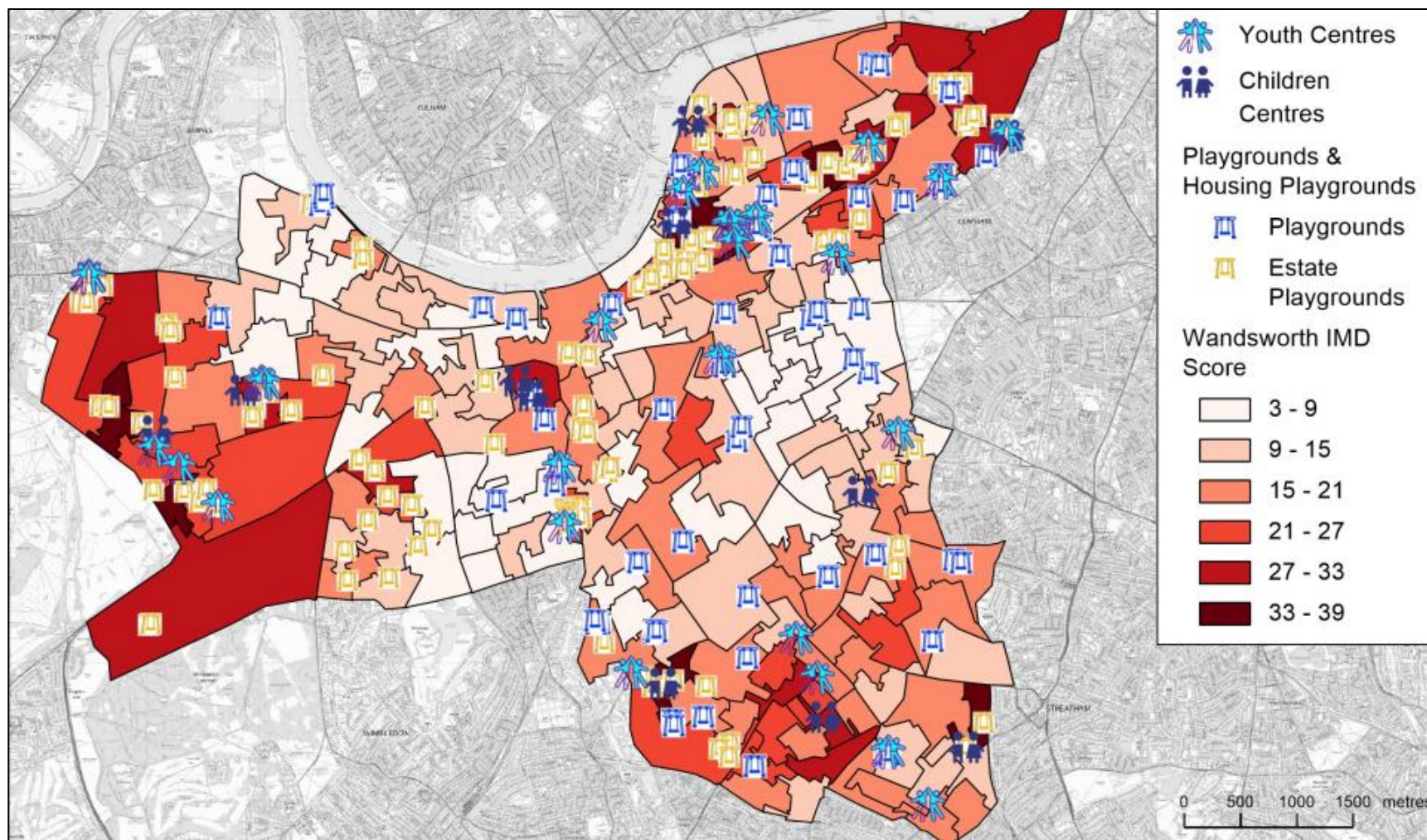




# Map of Wandsworth Play Spaces

(Deprivation – IMD Score)

This map shows play spaces against the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score – the higher the number, the more deprived the area.



# Our Play Provision

In addition to our wide variety of play spaces, Wandsworth is also rich in activities and events for children and families to take part in, bringing communities together through play.

## Wandsworth Connected

**WANDSWORTH  
CONNECTED**



Our **‘Wandsworth Connected’ Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme** is delivered in the Easter, Summer, and Winter holidays, in partnership with our voluntary and community sector.

Together, we provide local children and young people with a wide range of fun, enriching activities, along with a hot, nutritious meal, helping our most vulnerable and disadvantaged families in the school holidays. The programme is specifically designed for students in Reception – Year 11 and is completely free for those who receive pupil premium funding, ensuring **access for all**.





# Our Family Hubs, Children's Centres & Youth Provision

Our **family hubs, children's centres, and youth centres**, have a rich play and activity offer for children and young people of all ages.

Parents, carers and toddlers can attend '**Stay, Play and Learn**' sessions, where they can learn to play creatively with their children as well as meet and socialise with other adults. There are also the **Fantastic 2s** and **Getting Ready for Nursery** programmes, where children are introduced to free play and interactive circle time.

We have a fantastic youth provision, delivered alongside our VCS partners, that includes an outreach service which travels across the borough providing a safe space for teens to relax, socialise, play games, do arts and crafts, as well as access key services.

We also recently launched our very own music studio, **Falcon Groove**, where young people can express themselves through creative art, music, and social media, supported by experienced key workers.



**Wandsworth  
family hub**\*





# Our Support for Care Experienced & Vulnerable Parents

As part of our play provision at children's centres, we hold **Future Tots**, a **stay and play** group specifically for care experienced parents, offering peer support as well as learning about child development and the **importance of play**.

We have also partnered with Little Village to deliver **bundles of joy** alongside our new **baby boxes**, which provide much needed essentials for parents and babies in the early years of childhood, including toys and books. This a key part of our **outreach offer** to support socially isolated and disadvantaged pregnant young women, as well as leaving care young parents. We will support them to access local community services, enabling them to achieve the best outcomes for their babies and themselves.

We will also connect them with dedicated council officers, Family Hub Connectors, who will stay with them on **their journey through early years**. We will be working with our health colleagues to measure the impact of the baby boxes on the children and families over the next few years.



# Our Provision for Children & Young People with SEND

A core part of our SEND local offer is **short breaks**, which give children and young people with SEND the chance to spend time away from their families, gain independence, learn new skills, take part in exciting activities, and have fun with friends. It also gives parents and carers the chance to have a 'break' from their caring responsibilities.

We are currently reviewing our short breaks and will be aligning our offer with the new vision for play.

We are also proud to have a dedicated adventure playground for children and young people with SEND, **Lady Allen Playground**, which hosts soft play, zip wires, sensory rooms, nest swings, climbing frames, treehouses, and bikes and trailers. It's a space where children can explore and have fun, where they can decide when, how, and what they want to play with. The playground is supported by qualified and trained staff to ensure **access for all** children.

We will be investing over £380k in Lady Allen playground in the next year, to ensure it can provide the best experiences.

**SEND**  
**LOCAL**offer

Wandsworth's Local Offer for 0-25 year olds with special educational needs and/or disabilities





# SEND Family Fun Day

We have an **annual SEND Family Fun Day** held at George Shearing, for all children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND and their families.

The event includes fun activities such as outdoor play, circus skills, face painting, and boxing, as well as a sensory zone, yoga and photo booth. Parents and carers can also experience some rest and relaxation, with massages on offer, while their children are safe and supported to play.

This year was our busiest ever, with **296 people** attending!

***“An amazing event for the community!” – Parent***

*“We had a fantastic day. We really enjoyed the day. Thank you” – Parent*

*“Absolutely amazing activities planned. We really enjoyed the whole session, and great services, Thank you”  
– Parent*





# Play Events in Wandsworth

We hold lots of exciting events throughout the year, such as **'Summer In'**, **'Wandsworth's Big Play Out'**, and **'Happy Streets'**.

**'Summer In'** is an annual 5-week programme of events and activities in local parks across Wandsworth, run in partnership with Enable. There is something for the whole family to enjoy, including live music, dance, pottery, archery, and even circus skills!

**'Wandsworth's Big Play Out'** is a week of free and fun summer activities in Battersea Park, run in partnership with Enable, Battersea Summer Scheme, and Smart Hospitality. It is aimed at children aged 5-16 from families who may be impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, and everyone who attends is offered a free hot and nutritious meal. Activities include music workshops, dance classes, inflatables and soft play, disco, games and crafts!

We also have an annual **'Happy Streets'** festival for families in Battersea, including live performances, play spaces, arts and crafts and wellbeing sessions.



# Play Consultation & Engagement

We are proud of our wide range of play spaces, activities, and events in Wandsworth, but we want to make our offer even bigger and better. We have worked hard over the last few months to **engage with and listen to** our children, young people and families, to understand what they think of play in Wandsworth.

To kick off this consultation, we ran an online survey, promoted in spaces such as our children's centres, family hubs, and libraries. Our incredible Participation team also met with families at events and community sessions, as well as visiting local schools and talking with our Youth Council. This engagement was supported by data from our Young People's Health & Wellbeing Survey (2022), to understand more about young people's views on leisure time.

Key themes from this engagement included:

Regular visits to play spaces, with praise for our friendly staff

A desire for better quality, age-specific, and inclusive facilities

A trend of play opportunities diminishing as children grow older

Concerns about safety (particularly girls)

Concerns about the cost of activities

**This is only the start.** We will keep listening to our local communities on their needs and interests when it comes to play as we shape our future provision, as well as working with partners (particularly schools) to strengthen our provision.

# Play Consultation – Key Findings

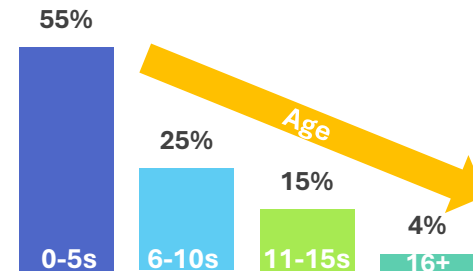
The consultation included:

- **236 online responses**
- **57 families** at community sessions
- **Over 150 young people** at events & focus sessions



**95%** of respondents said they use parks & play spaces **regularly**.

Most respondents said they visit parks and play spaces with **younger children**....



**Safety** was raised as a key concern from parents and older children, particularly for girls. Most said they prefer **enclosed** play spaces or **supervised** group sessions for teens. There were lots of requests for **additional lighting** in parks and open spaces.



Some older children remarked that **they didn't have enough time to play**, visit play facilities or take part in local activities.



Families praised our parks, family hubs, and spaces like Kimber Skate Park. They liked the **quality of facilities** and the **friendly staff**.

Families said they would like to see **more age-specific and inclusive facilities** (e.g. for older children and those with SEND); **improvements to water-logged parks**, more **enclosed spaces** for supervised sessions, and **more toilets & baby-changing facilities**.

Young people expressed they wanted a mixture of **inside and outside play spaces**, ideally accompanied by food or a meal. Many were keen for a homework club – a space where they could concentrate, supported by an adult

Many young people and families wanted **longer opening hours** in play spaces.

Penwortham Primary School shared that they are exploring **new ways to play**, letting children lead the way. Each class has regular lessons outside, e.g. learning about the water cycle by sketching it out in chalk on the ground. They've also let the playground be a free space for play, observing that children have naturally formed designated spaces for creative play.

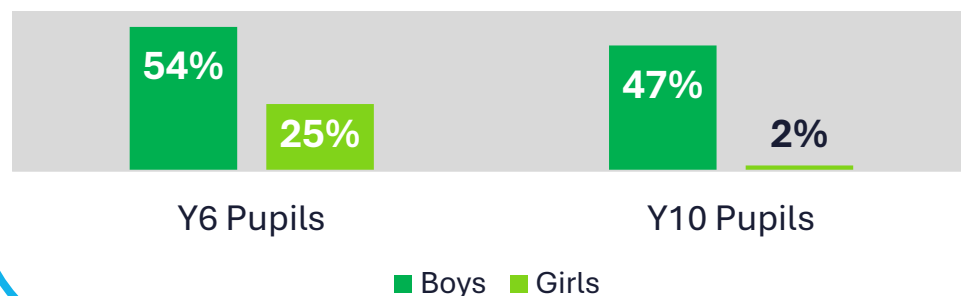


# Young People's Survey\* – Key Findings

## Engaging in active play...

**50%** of Y6 pupils said they engaged in active play at least 5 days a week. This dropped to **17%** of Y10 pupils.

There was also a clear gender split, with **boys far more likely to play than girls.**



## In the last 4 weeks...

**74%** had visited parks or open spaces

**70%** had visited playgrounds

## Barriers to play...

When asked if anything stopped them from doing activities they like:

- **13%** said **none of their friends go**
- **12%** said they were **too embarrassed** (6% of boys and 12% of girls)
- **7%** said it was **too expensive**

# Our Pledge

We have big plans for play in Wandsworth, and your feedback is instrumental in shaping what this looks like. We have been listening carefully to your priorities and work is well underway to address them.

At the **heart** of our pledge is:

# Our Pledge: Key Actions



## YOU SAID, WE WILL....



You want improvements to play facilities, with more **inclusive** and **age-specific** equipment available

Assess the needs of **every** local playground in Wandsworth, making **upgrades** and **improvements**

You want **better lighting** in play spaces

Improve lighting in **all** local playgrounds

You want **longer opening hours** in play spaces

**Extend opening hours** in playgrounds and pilot using Roehampton school playgrounds **outside school hours**  
**Pilot longer opening hours** at family hubs

Play activities are **too expensive** and **opportunities for play reduce** as children grow older

**Strengthen** our play offer and youth provision  
**Open** council-owned spaces for VCS organisations to use for **free / low-cost play activities**  
Offer **free soft play** to under 8s at leisure centres for those eligible as part of our Access for All scheme.  
Develop our **10 x 10 programme** - ensuring every child in Wandsworth experiences 10 life-enriching activities by age 10

**Safety is a key concern** for both parents and young people

**Expand** supervised sessions for young people  
Work with **Community Safety** to address concerns  
Promote **free play streets** to create safe play spaces outside



# What Will Success Look Like?

## 2025 – A Year of Play

As LBOC, we will make 2025 the Year of Play, bringing communities together through activities, events, and more! We want:

- An increase in pupils engaging in active play*
- At least 10% of local population (all ages) to describe their wellbeing positively*

## Investing in Play

We want Wandsworth to be the best place for play. We will:

- Invest over £4m in play in Wandsworth*
- 100% of all playgrounds audited, refurbished and upgraded as appropriate (incl. lighting)*
- Install / animate community gardens in housing estates*
- Increase the number of pocket parks*
- Work with Planning colleagues to ensure every new development considers the importance of play*

## Working Together

We need to work together to achieve our play ambitions. We will:

- Appoint play champions in each cluster as community representatives, working with us to promote, inspire, and cheer on play!*
- Engage with 100% of VCS, schools, and educational settings in conversations around play*
- Offer access to free Council spaces for play to all partners*

## Free, Safe & Fun Activities for All

We want everyone to have access to exciting and inclusive play opportunities in Wandsworth. We want:

- Free events across all 22 wards*
- All children and young people offered access to free cultural programmes*
- Offer free soft play to under 8s at leisure centres for those eligible as part of our Access for All scheme.*
- All children supported to experience our 10x10 programme*
- Increase in free play sessions and activities for young people at our family hubs*

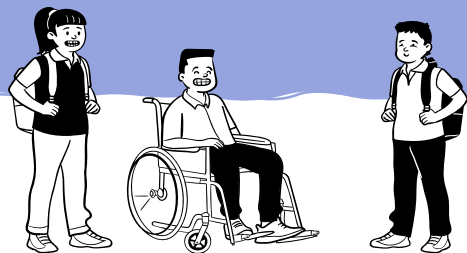
# Our Vision

We want Wandsworth to be a place where **every** child and young person can access high-quality play provision close to where they live, and participate in fun, safe, and inclusive activities that meet their unique needs and interests. Together with partners, we will support children and families to become empowered to explore the world through play.

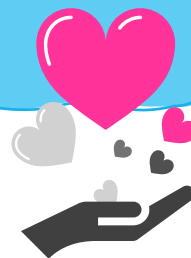
We know we have a rich and exciting play provision in Wandsworth, but we're excited about how this could be even better. We are actively listening to our children, young people, and families about what they want from play and using this to strengthen our offer.

We will focus on three key areas to ensure that Wandsworth is the best place for play:

## People at Play



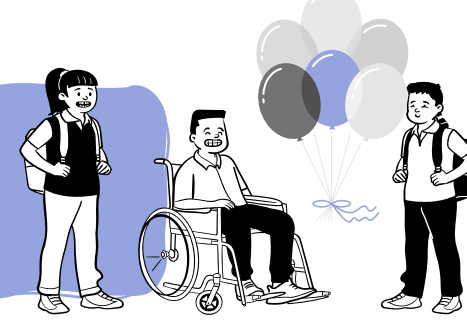
## Communities at Play



## Environments for Play



## People at Play



We will ensure **access for all** children, young people and families to fun and inclusive play opportunities within Wandsworth, no matter their age, needs, or socio-economic background.

We will ensure there is a wide range of fun activities for children and young people with SEND, meeting both their interests and needs, by listening to feedback from families and aligning our work with the Short Breaks Review.

We will support parents to **play at home** by sharing information and guidance, running play sessions at our hubs, and providing vulnerable families with Baby Boxes, containing toys, books and other essentials for a child's early years.

We will expand provision run by our **experienced team** at children centres, family hubs, youth sites, libraries, and leisure centres to include more play and activities, looking particularly at age-specific provision for older children and teens.

We will develop Wandsworth's own **10 x 10 programme**, co-created with partners, to ensure that every child experiences 10 key life-enriching activities by the age of 10.

We will work with schools and early years providers to develop play opportunities even further, engaging parents and carers in the exciting new play work being developed.



## Communities at Play



We will continually engage with local communities to ensure that our play spaces and provision meet the needs and interests of our children, young people and families.

We will actively listen to the feedback of our communities and use it to shape our approach.

We will highlight the importance of access to play in before and after school clubs.

We will work in partnership with local communities – with schools, health colleagues and our voluntary and community sector – to expand our play provision and drive forward our vision together as **one Wandsworth.**

We will connect with our partners and colleagues to align ongoing work and strategies, including regeneration programmes and our cultural offer, to develop a place-based approach to play.

We will raise awareness of play in local communities, promoting the benefits of play for both fun and learning, in schools and at home.

We will pilot our place-shaping approach in Roehampton as part of the Alton regeneration.

We will harness the power of our status as London Borough of Culture in 2025 to drive forward our vision for play.

# Environments for Play



We will ensure there is a diverse mix of inclusive play environments to suit every child's needs and interests, particularly paying attention to feedback from local families on our parks and playgrounds, making sure that our borough has the **brilliant basics** required for play.

We will invest in our play spaces through our approved capital funding of £4m contributing to our **decade of renewal**.

We will actively contribute to the development of regeneration plans and programmes to ensure there is play-based provision.

We are investing in our family hubs and children's centres to transform the spaces into welcoming and friendly places for families to spend time in, socialise, and play.

We will listen to and act on feedback from families on safety concerns and other issues in our parks and playgrounds.

We will encourage residents to transform their roads into '**Play Streets**', creating environments for play right outside their homes for **free**.

We will put sustainability at the heart of our plans for transforming play environments, in line with our plans to be carbon-neutral as a council by 2030.

We will create more pocket parks and community gardens, for everyone to enjoy.

# Our Key Achievements So Far

We have already begun our journey on making Wandsworth the best place for play. Below are a few of our key achievements so far.

## Our Dedicated Play Events

Our play provision is already strong, and we hold many play events throughout the year, including the 'Big Play Out', launched following the Cost-of-Living Crisis to offer a week of free activities & meals to low-income families

## Free Tickets to Tooting Lido

We release **250 free tickets** to eligible families **every day** during Lido season for Tooting Lido, the biggest in London, after its recent refurbishment

## Free Sports, Swim & Gym

More people than ever are now eligible for free sports, swim and gym sessions in Wandsworth, including **free swimming for all** under 8s

## Baby Boxes

We have just launched our new baby boxes for young and care experienced parents which contain toys and books as well as much-needed essentials for early years.

## Investment in Play

Our newly approved £4m investment is in addition to already pledged investment to Lady Allen Playground and George Shearing Football Pitch, and will include improvements to Latchmere Playground, Garrett Green Playground, and Heathbrook Park playground

## Wandsworth Connected

We have a strong HAF offer, providing fun, inclusive activities and nutritious meals to children in school holidays in partnership with local providers. In Summer 2024, we saw 2,582 participants (incl. 518 with SEND).



# Recent Playground Refurbishments

## The Pleasance, SW15





# Recent Playground Refurbishments

## Windmill Playground, SW18

Before



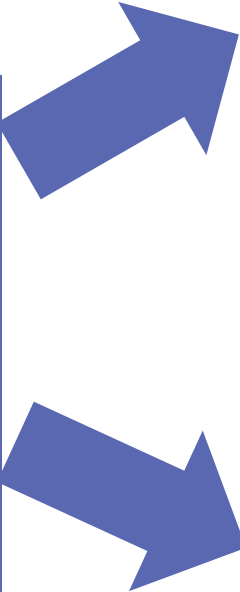
After





# Recent Playground Refurbishments

## Southmead Primary School





## What's Next?



- Planning and preparation for **'Year of Play'**
- Audit of local playgrounds, refurb works commencing
- Creation of 10x10 programme
- Review of play and youth provision
- Play Champions appointed
- Engagement with partners



- Launch of **'Year of Play'**, including special events and activities
- Launch of 10x10 programme
- Relaunch of free Play Streets
- Refurbishment works continue
- Expand play and youth provision
- Partners offered access to council-spaces for play activities



- Embedding Wandsworth's legacy as best place to play
- Refurbishment works continue
- Continuing to expand and enhance play and youth provision across the borough