

## APPENDIX 4

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This report looks at current public play facilities across Brighton & Hove, describes the unavoidable impact of aging play equipment and makes suggestions to protect play provision across the city in the future.

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**FINAL** Report September **2016**

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## Executive Summary

This report considers all data available on the condition of play equipment in parks and open spaces in Brighton & Hove and finds that whilst there is no immediate concern about the safety of the equipment, most items in play areas will either have to be removed or renewed within the next ten years. To retain all the existing play facilities across the city will require an investment of around £2.5million, in addition to the regular management and maintenance costs. This comes at a time when the Cityparks department may be required to find savings of around £600,000 from its operation.

The key headlines for decision makers regarding the condition of the play assets and the core funding available are as follows:

Of the 600 play items available in the city approximately 23 will need replacing in the next 0-3 years (£105,000); 145 in years 3-5 (£631,000); and 335 in the following 5 years (£1,5432,000).

See **Appendix 1** for the full financial programme of play equipment replacement and costs.

This has been calculated assuming that both of the existing city parks maintenance and capital budgets are utilised to replace equipment; meaning that smaller maintenance works would not be funded.

In 2016/17 Brighton & Hove City Council has two budgets for play areas:

- Cityparks Operations team has a £46,000 annual budget for maintenance
- Cityparks Parks Projects Team has another £108,000 to pay towards primarily (but not exclusively) the capital cost for playgrounds.

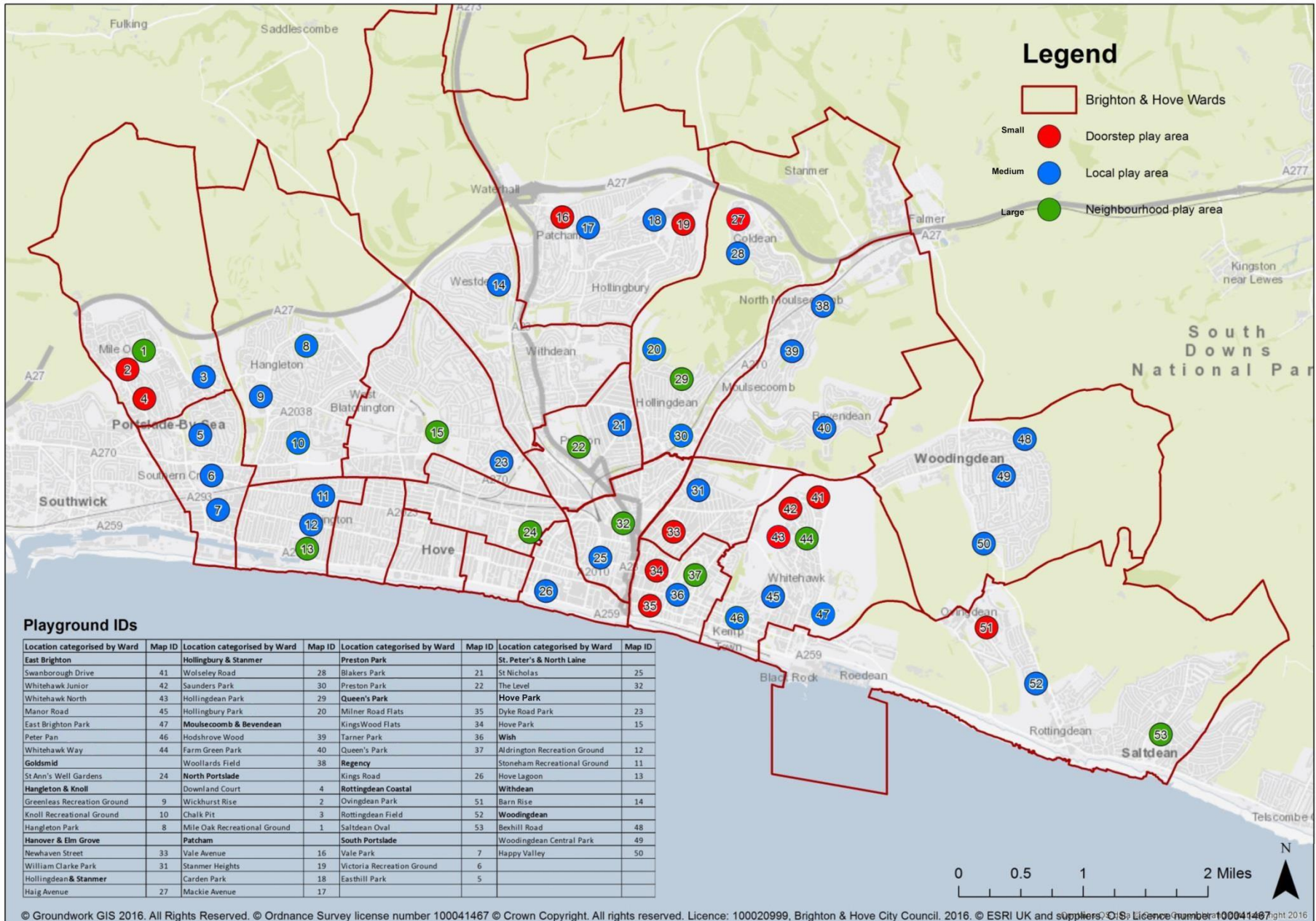
Therefore the council's combined core funding for playgrounds over ten years is approximately £1.6 million. It has been identified that alongside this sits £1 million of Section 106 capital funding for additional recreational facilities in parks and open spaces, of which a proportion of this can be assigned for play equipment. However as the Section 106 funding requires the council to *increase* their provisions in parks this will result in a greater capital and revenue strain to Cityparks budgets every time a new playground or piece of play equipment is added to their portfolio.

Cityparks have identified that if the two annual core budgets are maintained and used strategically then it will be possible to continue to replace equipment for the next five years. From years five to ten Cityparks will require further funding of around £700,000 which can be partly met from the section 106 funding. This resolution will be predicated however on a stable annual play budget that increases with inflation over the next ten years. In addition that the council effectively prepares for the anticipated drop in funding for parks when Section 106 money becomes the Community Infrastructure Levy. These figures also do not account for the additional wear and tear placed on play equipment by an increased population in the city that should be expected over the coming ten years.

The remainder of the document looks at various ways to reduce the impact of this financial situation. This has included looking at ways to retain current facilities through funding acquisition, retention, cost reduction or external support, and looking at ways to provide supplementary access to play in the event that play items are removed.



Map 1 shows the location of the fifty three public play areas provided by Brighton & Hove City Council within wards across the city.



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## Introduction

Brighton & Hove has fifty three play areas, ranging from small doorstep playgrounds to extensive play facilities set within large city parks. In 2009, Groundwork was asked to recommend which of these would most benefit from Playbuilder funding for improvement works. Twenty three sites were put forward for recommendation and many of these were subsequently renovated and now offer improved facilities to local children. Seven years on, in a dramatically different environment of widespread cuts to local government budgets. Groundwork has been asked to review available data about the city's playgrounds in order to identify a playground strategy to support the larger ten year Open Spaces Strategy being developed for Cityparks.

Brighton & Hove have 12 small, 31 medium and 10 larger playgrounds spread across the city. The play areas have been categorised in Map 1 as: Small Doorstep play areas, Medium Local play areas or Large Neighbourhood play areas, following the Fields in Trust (formerly National Playing Fields Association) guidelines below.

Facility	Age Range	Features
<b>Doorstep Play Area</b>	Toddler upwards	<b>Small</b> low key games area or open space within easy walking distance
<b>Local Play Area</b>	Up to 8 years	<b>Medium</b> sized play area with a least five types of play equipment, plus small area for rest and relaxation.  Located within 10 minutes of housing or other facilities.
<b>Neighbourhood Play Area</b>	Up to 15 years	<b>Large</b> play sites of at least eight types of equipment. Usually includes multi-user games area, such as a kickabout or sports field. Accessible to most children within 15-20 minutes walking distance from their home. There is a particular emphasis on providing equipment that meets the needs of older children. Located with sufficient distance of housing developments and where enough space can be allocated for the targeted age range.

Currently there is financial pressure on the council to reduce maintenance costs and this report aims to assist with this by providing a structured approach to both allocating capital money available for refurbishing existing equipment or replacing play equipment and implementing any cuts in services. It is anticipated that the Cityparks budget may need to be reduced from £4.2 million in 2016 to £3.6 million in 2019; an estimated reduction of approximately £600,000.

Whilst a new play area can cost upwards of £70,000 for a medium sized local play facility with five or six pieces of equipment, this does not include the hidden cost of inspecting, managing and maintaining the facility year on year, which pushes the true cost for play facilities much higher.

Routine tasks that have to be resourced to maintain safe and attractive play areas include:

- ✔ Daily and weekly safety inspections and annual safety audit
- ✔ Replenishing bark chippings and sand
- ✔ Litter picking and emptying bins
- ✔ Mowing and strimming grass
- ✔ Cutting back, pruning and maintaining shrubs
- ✔ Weeding
- ✔ Mulching planting
- ✔ Repairing play equipment damaged before end of life through misuse or vandalism

Any structured approach to investment and reducing expenditure has to consider the following factors:

- ✔ Condition of play equipment
- ✔ Access to play facilities
- ✔ Play value of facilities

Contractors and staff from the Cityparks Parks Operations team undertake daily and weekly inspections of all play areas to ensure there is no obvious damage or vandalism, such as broken glass on the ground or amongst bark chippings, which may represent a serious and immediate risk of injury to anyone in the play area and make arrangements to remove the risk. This may involve replenishing bark chippings or sand, removing broken glass, or repairing or removing unsafe equipment. The cost of employing staff to undertake the inspections is the single largest element of the playgrounds' maintenance budget.

In addition, Brighton & Hove's population is growing and consideration needs to be given in ensuring that the correct levels of play facilities are available in the required location for the city's children today and in the future. As part of any strategic planning of playgrounds the city will need better understand its play sites in relation to demographics whilst this report is only able to provide a snapshot of the current situation in the following table as a start point to the discussion.

2011 ward	Dependent children in household: All ages	Doorstep play	Local area play	Neighbourhood
	%			
Brunswick and Adelaide	11.5	0	0	0
Central Hove	12.7	0	0	0
East Brighton	25.7	2	3	2
Goldsmid	19.6	0	0	1
Hangleton and Knoll	33.6	0	1	2
Hanover and Elm Grove	25.3	1	1	0
Hollingdean and Stanmer	31.3	1	2	2
Hove Park	35.6	0	1	1
Moulsecoomb and Bevendean	31.3	0	3	0
North Portslade	34.7	2	2	0
Patcham	32.9	2	2	0
Preston Park	28.2	0	1	1
Queen's Park	15.2	2	1	1
Regency	9.5	0	1	0
Rottingdean Coastal	21.1	1	1	1
South Portslade	34.5	0	2	1
St. Peter's and North Laine	15.4	0	1	1
Westbourne	25.5	0	0	0
Wish	32.6	0	2	1
Withdean	29.4	0	1	0
Woodingdean	32.1	0	3	0
		<b>11</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>14</b>

**Table 1: Doorstep, Local and Neighbourhood play areas across the city in relation to the percentage of children in each ward.**

The following sections present the available data on the condition, location and quality of play facilities across the city.

## The Condition of Brighton & Hove's Play Equipment

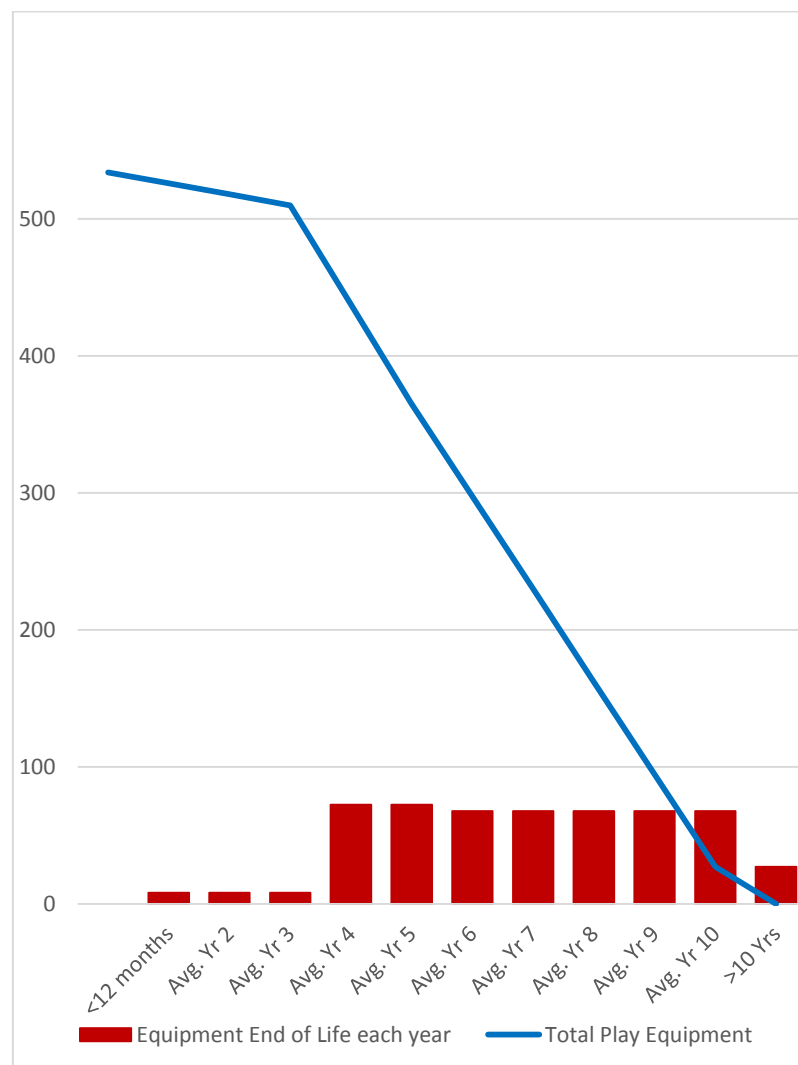
Brighton & Hove City Council currently maintains fifty three play areas across the city, which range in size from the Doorstep play area at Wickhurst Rise flats consisting of a single multi-activity unit for pre-schoolers to the newly commissioned Neighbourhood playground at The Level with forty individual items of play equipment.



**Image 1: Wickhurst Rise flats and The Level play equipment**

Across the city, the council maintains nearly 600 pieces of play equipment to ensure that they are serviceable and meet the council’s duty of care to any child playing on that equipment. Whilst manufacturers give new play equipment a life expectancy, this term may be shortened by high levels of use, exposure to extreme weather conditions, and abuse/vandalism or conversely extended by good stewardship and maintenance.

In addition to regular inspections by council officers, the council also commissions an annual audit by a specialist consultancy to undertake a detailed and comprehensive inspection of all public play facilities to ensure they are fully aware of the current condition and anticipated life expectancy of play equipment,. The 2015 annual audit, conducted by The Play Inspection Company, revealed that the play equipment in the city is generally in good condition, with only eight pieces of equipment in need of urgent attention as of October 2015. These have all been addressed within the 2015/16 budget. The full financial programme of play equipment replacement and costs is contained in Appendix 1.



**Graph 1: Equipment reaching end of life each year with overlay of play equipment with useful life remaining**



However, Graph 1 shows the forward projection for pieces of play equipment reaching the end of useful life over the next ten years, with an overlay showing the total number of surveyed items unaffected by obsolescence.

The numbers are heavily averaged to give an annual value, but the base data is measured in multi-year blocks (e.g. equipment predicted to expire in 5-10 years time). As a result larger spikes or troughs can be expected in any single year. The large amount of equipment expiring from years 4 to 10 is explained by the replacement and improvement of twenty seven play areas across the city during 2010 and 2011 as part of the government's Playbuilder Initiative, and the normal expected lifespan of 10-15 years for play equipment.

### **The Playbuilder Initiative**

The Playbuilder Initiative was a £235 million capital investment programme by the Labour government launched in 2008. It invested in public play spaces close to where children live and promoting an increase in outdoor, independent, active and adventurous play nationally.

Under the Playbuilder Initiative Brighton and Hove was granted £2million in 2009 to increase play provision across the city and, as a result, much of the equipment within Brighton and Hove was installed within a few short years. This is a key factor in the current crisis, as play equipment has an average lifespan of 10-15 years, meaning that much of the equipment across the city is expected to expire around the same time. The Playbuilder investment should still be highly regarded in terms of the benefit that it has provided to children and play across the city, and an achievement on the council's behalf for securing it. However, it should also be taken as a lesson learned that play equipment should be heavily staggered in its installation to account for difficult to predict economic futures.

### Removing, Refurbishing or Replacing

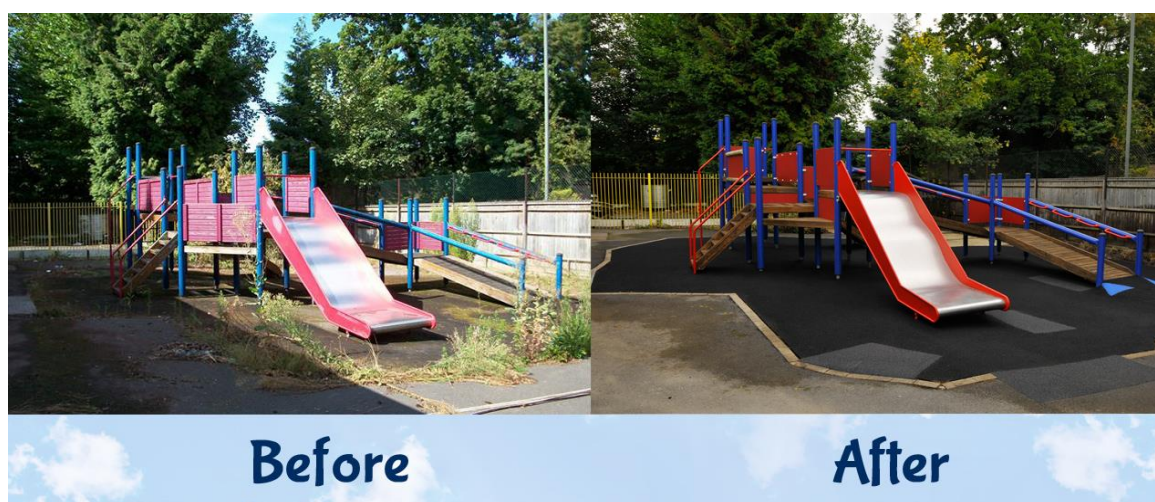
As play equipment reaches the end of its expected life, it creates a liability for the council and cannot be left on the site any longer. The cost implication of this is unavoidable. Individual items have to be refurbished, replaced or removed and the site made safe - involving reinstatement of safety surfaces or landscaping as a bare minimum.

Removal of Play Equipment	Replacement of Play Equipment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small items (rocking equipment, MUGA Multi Use Game Areas items, 1 bay swings) - £400-600</li> <li>• Medium items (2 bay swings, embankment slide, outdoor fitness items) - £600-800</li> <li>• Larger items (multi play unit, rotor play - £800-1200)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity equipment, multi play unit e.g. Sutcliffe Play Baby Mammoth £8.5K</li> <li>• Embankment slide, stainless steel – £4 - 5K</li> <li>• Rocking equipment – toddler springer £1.2 – 3K</li> <li>• Rotor play – roundabout - £5.5K, Russel Play rotating climber £6.7K</li> <li>• Swings – toddler 1 bay 2 seat, timber £3.6K</li> <li>• Swings – 2 bay, 4 seat, metal £5K</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Cost ranges for removal and replacement of play equipment at end of life**

These figures are a rough estimate of cost - it is difficult to give accurate figures for removing equipment as access and disposal are key factors which influence the cost greatly from site to site, including the not insignificant cost of disposing of safety surfacing. There may also be some items such as stainless steel slides where materials can be recycled as scrap or for renovation and re-use elsewhere. The estimated sums do however include project management/supervision and reinstatement of safety surfaces or landscaping of the site.

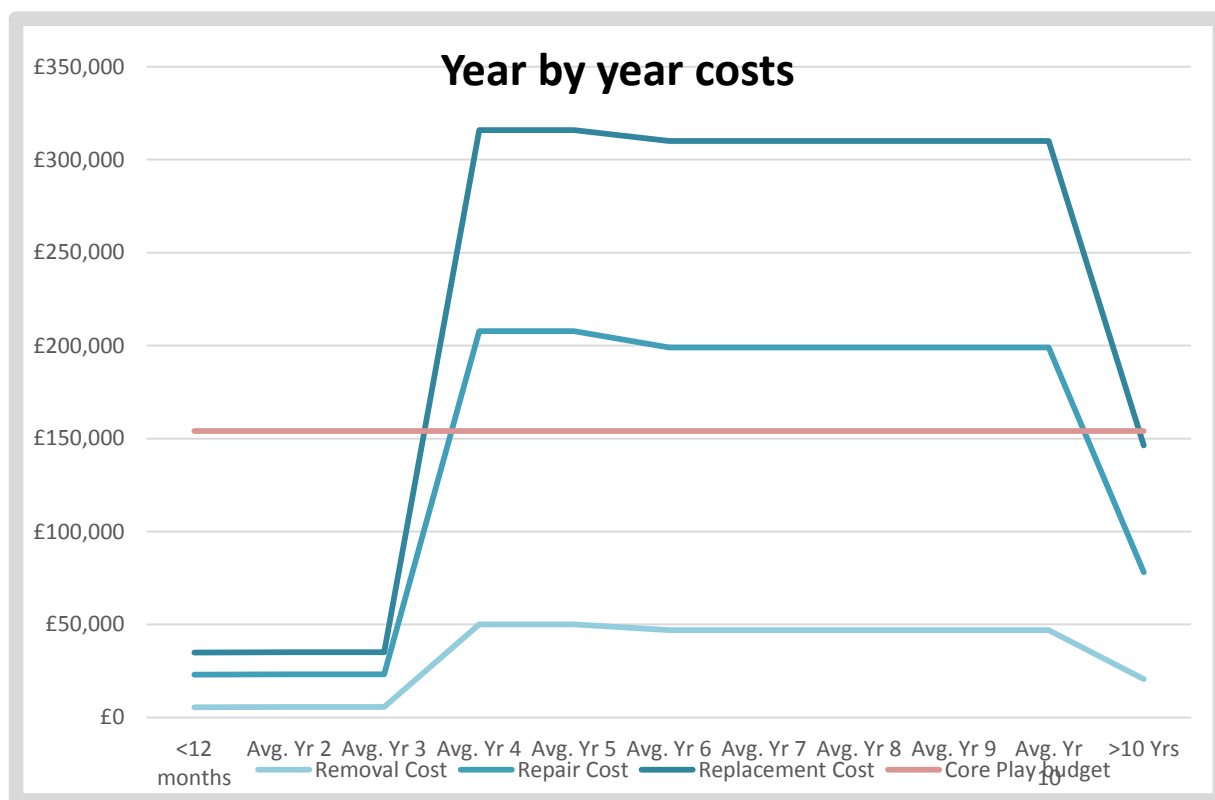
Refurbishment figures have been approximated at two-thirds of the cost of replacement, and may involve sand-blasting, re-painting or re-powder coating equipment; replacing roping; repairing timber; or reconfiguring and replacing safety surfacing and wet pour. Image 2 shows the positive impact of refurbishing traditional play equipment.



**Image 2: Example of refurbished play apparatus**

It was outside the scope of this report to calculate the impact of removing items of equipment on the management and maintenance budget over time but it should be highlighted again that the main costs in this budget relate to the staff costs to undertake the daily and weekly inspections of a play area. The majority of this expenditure will only be removed from the management and maintenance budget for a particular site when there is no play equipment left there, the fences have been removed and safety surfaces returned to blend into the surrounding park. The approximate costs for removal, refurbishment and renewal have been applied to the schedule of play equipment life expectancy in Graph 3 to give some scale to the likely cost implications annually.

Graph 3 shows three projected expenditure profiles arising from equipment reaching end of life, taken as an annual average from multi-year predictive data. The highest figures show the approximate cost of replacing obsolete items at end of life; the middle figures show the approximate cost of refurbishing equipment to extend its life span; whilst the lowest figures show the approximate cost of removing items at end of life. The figures are not index-linked but show approximate costs for 2016, and it should be noted that predicted figures have been heavily averaged over time and could present with steeper spikes and troughs.

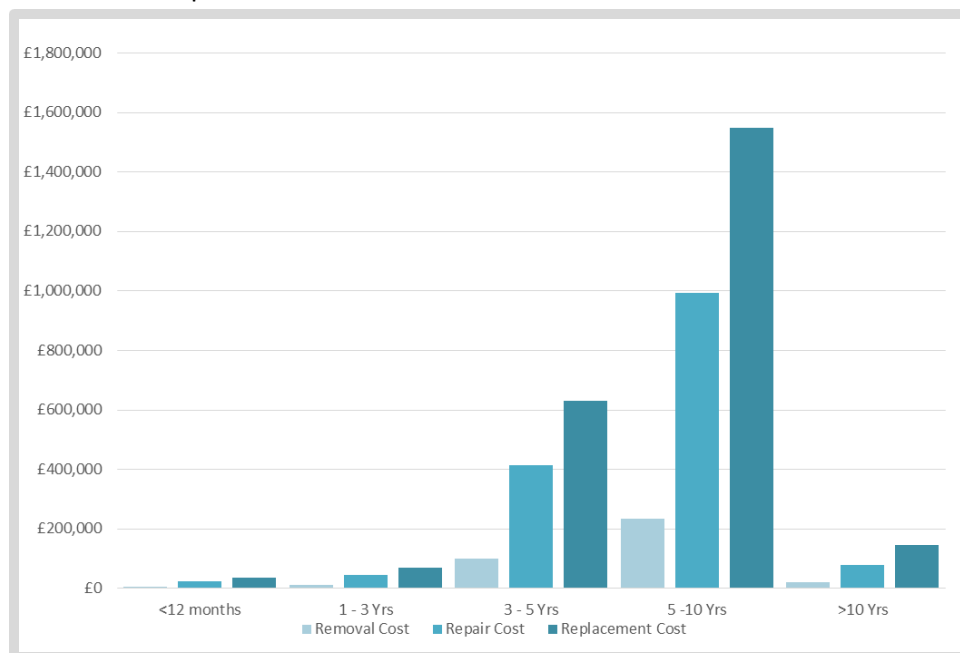


**Graph 3: Average relative cost of removing, refurbishing or replacing play equipment at end of life each year with overlay of annual core play budget**

Very broadly speaking, the average annual capital budget required in 2019 and for the following 6 years to 2026 will be somewhere between £200,000 and £300,000 to maintain the current level of

play provision across Brighton & Hove. Graph 3 demonstrates that the council’s core budget of £154k for play is insufficient for a meaningful replacement programme, and will be unlikely to meet the demands of a repair programme over the next three years.

To demonstrate the data as it averages according to the windows of predicted life expectancy, it has been re-presented in Graph 4



**Graph 4: Relative cost of removing, refurbishing or replacing play equipment at end of life by original life expectancy prediction windows**

	<12 months	1 - 3 Yrs	3 - 5 Yrs	5 -10 Yrs	Totals to 2027
Replacement Cost	£ 35,000.00	£ 70,100.00	£ 631,600.00	£ 1,549,700.00	£ 2,286,400.00
Parks Projects & City Parks Play budget*	£ -	£ 462,000.00	£ 308,000.00	£ 770,000.00	£ 1,540,000.00
Net balance	-£ 35,000.00	£ 391,900.00	-£ 323,600.00	-£ 779,700.00	-£ 746,400.00

\* budget based on 2016/17 £108,000 Parks Projects and £46,000 City parks

**Table 3: Existing Budgets and Replacement Analysis**

**NB. The above chart does not account for increase in inflation over ten years which could erode the impact of the £156,000 core funding.**

## The Quality of Play Facilities

The play value assessment was completed using information from the annual play inspection report of September 2014 and a scoring system based on the RoSPA five star standards. The condition of play equipment was not taken into account. However, if a piece of equipment was unusable, e.g. if a basket swing was missing from its frame, then this was taken into consideration.

The RoSPA system awards points for the range of play opportunities available to different age groups: toddlers (4 years and under), juniors (5 – 12 years) and teenagers (13 years +). The system was modified in order to take into account the availability of opportunities for disabled children to enjoy the same experiences as non-disabled children. The principle of 'inclusivity' did not necessarily involve equipment specifically designed for disabled children. For example, a basket swing may provide a platform upon which a disabled child can be laid.<sup>1</sup>Table 4 shows the full list of criteria scored against and the number of points available.

The total number of play value points awarded for each site determined its rating between Poor and Excellent, as shown in Table 3.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
Toddlers	>25	19-24	14-18	9-13	<9
Juniors	>40	32-40	26-31	15-25	<15
Teenagers	>35	25-34	18-24	11-17	<11
Inclusivity	4	3	2	1	0
Overall	>100	76-99	55-75	35-54	<34

Table 4: Play value ratings

### Limitations

One limitation to carrying out the assessment was that it was conducted as a desktop exercise using play inspection photographs, in which it was sometimes difficult to see. This was particularly so with multiplay equipment. For example, Image 2 below: the rear side of the equipment is obscured from view, making it hard to see whether there are, for example, clutter bridges, climbing nets or fireman's poles.

The other limitation of carrying out a desktop exercise was that scent (on the RoSPA scoring system) could not be evaluated. As only 2 points were available, no remedial action was taken.



Image 3: Photograph of multiplay equipment at Whitehawk Senior, taken as part of the Annual Inspection

<sup>1</sup>[www.rospace.com/leisuresafety/info/playsafety/awards/judging.pdf](http://www.rospace.com/leisuresafety/info/playsafety/awards/judging.pdf) [accessed 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015]



Play Area	Toddlers	Juniors	Teenagers	Inclusivity	TOTAL play value
☼denotes Green Flag Award park					
<b>EXCELLENT</b>					
The Level☼	37	43	24	3	107
Hove Park☼	25	42	33	3	103
<b>GOOD</b>					
Preston Park☼	26	40	21	4	91
Saunders Park	34	36	19	1	90
Stoneham Recreational Ground☼	24	32	27	2	85
Knoll Recreational Ground	25	37	17	3	82
Carden Park	26	37	17	1	81
Hove Lagoon	30	33	17	0	80
Aldrington Recreation Ground	25	33	18	2	78
Queens Park	23	31	21	3	78
Saltdean Oval	18	30	27	1	76
<b>AVERAGE</b>					
Tarner Park	22	27	21	1	71
Woodingdean Central Park	16	29	22	2	69
St Ann's Well Gardens☼	21	29	15	3	68
Vale Park	16	31	19	1	67
Blakers Park	21	29	12	3	65
Easthill Park☼	15	30	18	2	65
Mile Oak	19	31	14	1	65
William Clarke Park	13	29	18	1	61
Hollingdean Park	4	27	29	0	60
Dyke Road Park	24	28	6	1	59
Rottingdean Field	13	27	16	1	57
Hollingbury Park	21	19	14	2	56
<b>BELOW AVERAGE</b>					
Hangleton Park	7	24	20	1	52
St Nicholas	18	20	12	1	51
Woollards Field	9	23	16	3	51
East Brighton Park	16	21	12	1	50
Kings Road Play Area	25	25	0	0	50
Hodshrove	18	20	10	1	49
Mackie Avenue	21	28	0	0	49
Greenleas Park	16	19	12	1	48
Happy Valley	17	19	10	2	48
Whitehawk Way	12	22	12	1	47
Wolseley Road	20	16	10	1	47

Table 4: Play Value Scores ranked using the RoSPA rating system

Play Area	Toddlers	Juniors	Teenagers	Inclusivity	TOTAL play value
William Clarke Park	13	29	18	1	61
Hollingdean Park	4	27	29	0	60
Dyke Road Park	24	28	6	1	59
Rottingdean Field	13	27	16	1	57
Hollingbury Park	21	19	14	2	56
<b>BELOW AVERAGE</b>					
Hangleton Park	7	24	20	1	52
St Nicholas	18	20	12	1	51
Woollards Field	9	23	16	3	51
East Brighton Park	16	21	12	1	50
Kings Road Play Area	25	25	0	0	50
Hodshrove	18	20	10	1	49
Mackie Avenue	21	28	0	0	49
Greenleas Park	16	19	12	1	48
Happy Valley	17	19	10	2	48
Whitehawk Senior	0	24	22	0	46
Barn Rise	21	22	0	1	44
Bexhill Road	6	24	10	1	41
Chalk Pit	2	22	15	1	40
Farm Green	5	23	10	1	39
Manor Road	9	18	10	0	37
Peter Pan Children's Play Area	15	20	0	0	35
Victoria Recreation	9	20	6	0	35
<b>Poor</b>					
Whitehawk Junior	8	12	10	0	30
Downland Court	3	16	6	0	25
Ovingdean Park	7	11	0	1	19
Newhaven Street	6	12	0	0	18
Kingswood Flats	0	11	6	0	17
Stanmer Heights	7	10	0	0	17
Haig Avenue	5	9	0	0	14
Milner Road Flats (before renewal)	6	7	0	0	13
Vale Avenue	1	9	0	0	10
Wickhurst Rise Flats	0	10	0	0	10

Table 4: Play Value Scores ranked using the RoSPA rating system

## Suggestions to Retain Play Facilities

The data contained in the first part of this report should enable Brighton & Hove's councillors, residents and council officers to have an informed debate about the role of outdoor play for children living in and visiting the city and take the necessary decisions and action to maintain good quality, safe and accessible outdoor play opportunities.

As a leading environmental charity working across the UK with councils and communities to improve their parks and open spaces, Groundwork would like to take this opportunity to suggest a number of additional or alternative approaches to play provision in the city's parks as a starting point for further discussion. They include:

- Retaining the Core Play Budget
- Section 106 Contributions
- Rationalising Play Sites
- Natural Play
- External Grant Funding
- Private Sponsorship
- Community Involvement

### Retaining the Core Play budget

Cityparks currently utilises £154,000 a year to maintain the city's children's play areas. In order to meet the financial challenges in maintaining play areas it is vital that this budget is retained in line with inflation or ideally increased. The threat to this budget is reflected by the councils need to reduce its overall cost. Cityparks are likely to need to make saving of around £600,000 from their £4.2 million budget. We would recommend that this budget is retained and linked to inflation to ensure play provision is suitably funded across the city.

### Section 106 contributions from new development

Developer contributions (known as Section 106 agreements) are anticipated to include around £1 million of funding identified for recreation facilities in parks over the next few years. A proportion of this money can be assigned to playgrounds and their equipment. Crucially this money cannot be used to replace or maintain play equipment but must show a clear increase of provision to accommodate additional population brought into areas by developments. Increasing the provision for play in parks can sometimes assist in addressing the challenge: e.g. by removing two swings and replacing them with three. However Section 106 funding has to be used within proximity of the new development so not all play areas across the city will benefit from this source. In addition the council should be mindful that in the next five years it is possible that this funding source will change to a 'Community Infrastructure Levy', which release the location restrictions, but will likely mean that more large-scale infrastructure projects such as transport schemes are funded and fewer parks receive the capital. In this scenario the council should seek to identify secondary sources of funding to meet the play challenge in around five years. Finally, caution must be applied to the use of Section 106 funding to plug a funding gap in play provision, as the nature of any required 'increase in capacity' is likely to also entail an increased cost of maintenance liability further in the future. In other words, using Section 106 to solve a funding problem now could actually cause a snowball effect in a further 10-15 years, when a greater amount of equipment will need to be replaced.

### Rationalise Play Sites

As the city has grown and changed over the last ten to twenty years it is important to investigate whether the current 53 sites are still in the right location for the present and future population. Anecdotal evidence is starting to suggest that some areas have too many play sites and equipment whilst others have too little. At this stage in the report we were not able to obtain enough data to map the provision across the city. Therefore we suggest that the council completes a map of its play provision in relation to young people to provide a clear understanding of demand and use before replacing or removing play items. The council should additionally be aware that anecdotal evidence has indicated that population movement (e.g. influx of students to and egress of families from the city centre) has altered demographics of certain areas and compounded the problem of play locations. This should be reviewed in the light of new Census data that should be expected in 2021 which will demonstrate most accurately where families and children reside in the city and whether play sites still reflect their local population.

### Natural Play

According to Play England's report, 'Play, Naturally', there is substantial evidence for the benefits of children's play in natural settings. These include direct benefits to children's physical, mental and emotional health, due to the combination of contact with nature and a diversity of play experiences.<sup>2</sup>

Natural playgrounds are play environments that blend natural materials, features and plants with creative landforms to create purposely complex interplays of natural, environmental objects in ways that teach children about risk-taking, social interaction and the natural world. They include sand, grass matting and bark chippings as alternative surface treatments to wet pour and safety surfacing; and timber finished play equipment rather than metal.



**Image 4: Natural play features**

When integrating natural play features and equipment into a play area, those elements demand the same duty of care from the council and are subject to the same legislative requirements

Brighton & Hove has a huge number of green spaces and parks within the city, as well as long pebble beaches along the South coast, and the many ways that these can enhance our experience of city

<sup>2</sup> Lester, S. and Maudsley, M. (2007), 'Play Naturally: A review of children's natural play'

living is reflected in the area's status as a UNESCO Biosphere site. Excellent examples of natural play opportunities exist in St Anne's Well Gardens where children can be seen playing through the stand of trees opposite the Café in the Park; using the mounds and logs in Easthill park, exploring the dead tree left standing in Stanmer Park and bouldering on the artificial rock form in Hove Park.

Given the city's location between the Downs and the sea, its active Forest Schools contingent and its surplus of large trees, a great deal more could be done to create exciting and engaging natural play elements within parks in conjunction with traditional play equipment.

Access to natural play is an important factor to consider for children, and it should be considered in the least as a direction to focus on when replacing play equipment, or as a supplement to the existing play offer. It is possible however that natural play could be considered a money saving exercise for the council, as some (not all) natural play items require less initial cost (e.g. natural logs), or require less maintenance and have a considerable lifespan in comparison to structured play equipment (e.g. climbing boulders).

We suggest that the council consider the following natural play items in replacement of some traditional play equipment:

- Large wooden tree trunk sections organised and cut appropriately
- Hillock and mound creations
- Artificial climbing boulders targeted at specific age groups
- Managing trees, shrubs and woodlands to encourage play where appropriate.
- Climbing and tactile wood and stone sculptures

It should be remembered that sand has the highest level of play value for young children (see Appendix 3). However the maintenance and daily inspection of sand areas does mean that many local authorities are wary of adding more sites into their parks.

We also suggest that the Cityparks department review its own policies and practices in relation to allowing informal natural play to thrive in the council's parks and green spaces and furthermore engage with the Biosphere project and third sector organisations with particular regard to promoting informal play opportunities in any public open space within the city.

### **External Grant Funding**

Brighton and Hove is fortunate to have over thirty six Friends of Parks groups and many other third sector organisations that utilise the park asset. A number of these groups have already successfully attracted funding for open spaces such as 'Parc' based in Saltdean which is a local charity. In July 2016 over 300 grants were available to local groups through the Grantfinder programme used by a number of departments in the council.

In addition Cityparks has been successful in attracting much larger pots of money such as Playbuilder and Heritage Lottery funding for some of its sites. Whilst the competition is increasing for these pots of money, rationalising which parks are likely to secure the bigger pots may allow the council to target its core funding more effectively.



It is therefore suggested that to maximise potential funding for Brighton & Hove play areas, the council should work in cooperation with third sector organisations and Friends groups to strategically attract funding especially for areas which are unlikely to secure Section 106 funding (developers contributions).

As this will require staff resources to manage, Cityparks should be mindful about who and how many organisations are engaged with at any one time, and how the cost of staff time could offset the true value of funding gains.

### **Private Sponsorship**

Many of Brighton & Hove parks have a significant footfall and could therefore provide a high profile platform for companies and businesses to promote their brand. In particular in some of the city centre locations, businesses benefit enormously from proximity to parks and open spaces.

Our recommendation is that the council looks strategically at which parks and which organisations would best lend themselves to supporting a park. If successful this programme could aid in funding both capital and revenue income for parks. However, sponsorship is rarely a permanent solution so once started a concerted may need to be retained to keep future contributions rolling.

We suggest that the council put together an engagement package along with the strategy and identifies which staff, councillors and stakeholders would lead on these delicate negotiation and engagement matters.

### **Community Involvement**

An alternative approach to reducing the management and maintenance costs of running play areas is to explore the potential involvement of the local community and interested community groups, schools, youth organisations or social landlords.

Whilst in the current climate of budgetary austerity, schools and nurseries in particular may not be able to consider taking on maintenance responsibilities for a nearby play area, they might be willing to use existing caretaking staff on site to undertake the safety inspections rather than lose a facility which may also be used during and after school hours by their pupils.

Community groups such as a park's Friends group, a local residents association or school parents groups may be willing to 'adopt' nearby play areas at risk of closure and can be supported to undertake funding applications or fundraising activities by community development organisations such as Groundwork South or Trust for Developing Communities.

A potential innovation that could be explored is the roll out of a specialist phone or tablet app, compatible with both android and iOS platforms, to record play area inspections, accompanied by a training programme for community groups, schools, nurseries, youth organisations and social landlords to enable representatives of these groups to work alongside City Parks staff to undertake the regular inspections. However, this will not mitigate the capital or revenue challenges facing the council in relation to replacement or refurbishment of playgrounds over the next decade.

Additionally, attention must be paid to the initial investment to set up or organise community based initiatives, and savings in time must be offset against the required input of officer hours to reveal the true impact of any projects.

## Supplementing the City's Play Offer

### Street play

Playing Out is a Community Interest Company working to encourage and support local people who want their children to play out in the streets where they live. This form of play is described as 'free play' as it allows children to generate their own forms of play without the structure provided by specific equipment, toys, or co-ordinating youth workers. Street play requires the street to be closed on occasion for the local children to play in free of traffic. Brighton & Hove is amongst the thirty four local authorities actively encouraging street play through this scheme, by promoting the scheme and simplifying and streamlining the process for closing roads to traffic for short periods of time. The cost commitment is small but the community benefit for residents, families and children significant. The Round Hill Road off from the Ditchling Road has had several successful Street Play days.

We recommend that street play is considered as a beneficial addition to play in the city in its own right, but in the least it can be viewed as a supplementary offer in those areas that are currently lacking nearby play provision and cannot expect any in the near future.



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## About Groundwork South

Groundwork was established more than three decades ago in Liverpool as a radical experiment to bring together communities, businesses and government. The main aim was to improve the quality of life in communities that had been neglected and to promote their sustainable development.

From our roots and successes in Liverpool, Groundwork quickly grew and the organisation began working across whole of the United Kingdom, including the south of England, where we have been running a wide range of projects for the past 35 years.

Groundwork South, as it is now known, was created in 2012 and is made up of six area teams, working in communities from Kent to Cornwall. The Sussex & Surrey team have recently moved from Falmer to offices in the Portslade Aldridge Community Academy campus.

Our work is underpinned by our mission to make the South of England a greener and more prosperous place for people and communities.

## About The Park Projects Team

This report was produced in partnership with the councils Park Projects Team. The Parks Projects Team is the developmental arm of Cityparks, managing internal and external funding, HLF bids, planning investments, and capital projects for parks. They secured the £2m Playbuilder money, £2.5m for the Level Park, and are applying for £3m from the Heritage Lottery Fund for Stanmer Park.

The Parks Projects Team will be utilising this document to inform the 10 year Open Spaces Strategy for Brighton & Hove. This document will provide the financial and strategic guide for all types of open spaces including playgrounds in the future and is set to be completed in January 2017.

## Further Reading

### **Play, Naturally:**

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/130593/play-naturally.pdf>

### **Supporting School Improvement Through Play:**

[http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/340836/supporting\\_school\\_improvement\\_through\\_play.pdf](http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/340836/supporting_school_improvement_through_play.pdf)

### **Nature Play: Maintenance Guide:**

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/120468/nature-play-maintenance-guide.pdf>

### **Creating Playful Communities:**

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/283281/ecp%20final%20report%20-%20final.pdf>

### **Design for Play:**

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

## Appendix 1: Schedule of Play Areas in Brighton & Hove

	Life expectancy of equipment showing estimated costs of replacement and S106 future					
Site name	< 12 Months	1 - 3 years	3 - 5 Years	5 -10 Years	> 10 Years	Grand Total
Aldrington Recreation Ground			10600	43200		53800
Barn Rise				35100		35100
Bexhill Road			8500	13300		21800
Blakers Park Play Area			18000	44400		62400
Carden Park Play Area		8500	19200	53200		80900
Chalk Pit (Warrior Close)		2000	26900	13500		42400
Downland Court		1500	12700	8500		22700
Dyke Road Park			2500	46300		48800
East Brighton Park				43200		43200
Easthill Park	5000	10600	30500	36800		82900
Farm Green			34800	12000		46800
Greenleas Park			12500	24200		36700
Haig Avenue				18200		18200
Hangleton Park			24600	31100		55700
Happy Valley				43100		43100
Hodshrove	4500	8500	16000	14000		43000
Hollingbury Park Playground			25500	41100		66600
Hollingdean Park			7000	36300	6100	49400
Hove Lagoon Play Area and Paddling Pool			7000	36500	37100	80600
Hove Park & Hove Fitness Area	5500		88500	13700		107700
Kingswood Flats				8500		8500
Knoll Recreation Ground			10600	41800	12100	64500
Mackie Avenue			21600	30100		51700
Manor Road		17000	18000	5200	22000	62200
Mile Oak Recreation Play Areas			9500	28300	2000	39800
Newhaven Street				18100		18100
Ovingdean Park				25600		25600
Preston Park	8500	5000	12500	32900		58900
Queens Park	1500	1500	28700	69500		101200
Rottingdean Field			13700	55000		68700
Saltdean Oval Playground		5500	28000	39300		72800
Saunders Park	5000		14300	59200		78500
St Ann's Well Playground			18700	35500		54200
St. Nicholas Play Area		2500	13600	28200		44300
Stanmer Heights				8500		8500
Stoneham Recreation Ground			1500	45000	17500	64000
Swanborough Drive	5000					5000
Turner Park			3500	49300	15000	67800
The Level Play Area & Skate Park		3000		60000		63000
The Level Play Area & Water Play				94600		94600
Vale Avenue Playground			12100			12100
Vale Park & Vale Fitness Park		2000	15300	31000	15500	63800
Victoria Recreation				28700		28700
Whitehawk Junior				26200		26200
Whitehawk Senior/North			12100			12100
Whitehawk Way				15000	2500	17500
William Clark Park Playground				30100	16500	46600
Wolseley Road			5000	21600		26600
Woodingdean Central		2500	39500	10600		52600
Woollard's Field Play Area			8600	44200		52800
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>35000</b>	<b>70100</b>	<b>631600</b>	<b>1549700</b>	<b>146300</b>	<b>2432700</b>

## Appendix 2: Play Equipment Life Expectancy Timeline

(Graph 1 data)

TIME	<12 MONTHS	1 - 3 YEARS	3 - 5 YEARS	5 -10 YEARS	>10 YEARS
EQUIPMENT END OF LIFE	8	18	146	329	16
TOTAL PLAY EQUIPMENT	509	491	345	16	0

## Appendix 3: Play value scoring system

TODDLERS	Score	Examples
Balancing	1	Shallow steps
Crawling	1	Short tunnel
Rocking	1	Springer
Rotating	1	Spinner bowl
Sliding	1	Slide
Swinging	1	Cradle swing
Sand play	8	Sand areas, sand play unit
Water play	8	Paddling pool
Sensory items	3	Talking tubes, wobble mirror, musical instrument
Textural variety	2	Natural play areas, sculptures, different surfaces (bark, grass, etc. Not sand)
3+ primary colours	2	Red, yellow, blue
Toddler seating	1	Toadstool, low boulder, animal bench
Imaginative play	5	Area lending to use of child's imagination, e.g. playhouse, wooden animal
Interactive ability	2	Items encouraging group play, e.g. multiplay equipment
Parental seating (in toddler section)	1	Bench
JUNIORS	Score	Examples
Balancing	2	Balance beam
Crawling	1	Short tunnel
Rocking	1	See saw
Rotating	1	Spinning pole
Rotating (multi-user)	2	Supanova
Rocking and rotating	4	Overhead rotator, mobilus, waltz
Sliding conventional	1	Slide
Sliding (other)	1	Fireman's pole
Swinging (single)	1	Single swing
Swinging (group)	2	Basket swing
Gliding	2	Cable runway



Hanging	1	Overhead ladder
Climbing	2	Net climber
Gymnastics	1	Parallel bars, trapeze
Agility	2	Clatter bridge, boulders
Ball play	4	Multi use games area
Sand play	4	Sand area, sand play unit
Water play	4	Paddling pool
Sensory items	2	Talking tubes, wobble mirror, musical instrument
Textural variety	2	Natural play areas, sculptures, different surfaces (bark, grass, etc. Not sand)
Wheeled play	6	Skate park, cycle track
3+ primary colours	1	Red, yellow, blue
Interactive ability	4	Items encouraging group play, e.g. multiplay equipment. Exclude equipment counted in Rotating (multi-user) or Swinging (group) categories.
Junior seating	1	Bench, picnic table
Imaginative play	4	Area lending to use of child's imagination, e.g. play ship, sculpture, natural play area
Educational play	1	Abacus, noughts and crosses, sign language panel
Ground graphics	2	Hopscotch
<b>TEENAGERS</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Interactive ability	4	Items encouraging group play, e.g. climbing apparatus, roundabout. Exclude equipment counted in Swinging (group) category.
Sports simulation / dynamic	4	Challenger fitness equipment, table tennis table
Cardiovascular / muscular	4	Chest press, sit up station, leg stretch
Rocking and rotating	4	Overhead rotator, mobilus, waltz
Swinging (group)	4	Hammock swing
Gliding	3	Cable runway
Climbing	2	Rock stack, net climber
Textural variety	2	Rock features, natural play areas, sculptures, different surfaces (bark, grass, etc. Not sand)
Scent (from planting)	2	Lavender/rosemary
Humour	2	Seagull sculpture
Graphics	3	Teenage graphics
Teenage seating areas /	6	Teenage seating areas / shelters
Ball play	6	Multi use games area
Wheeled play (for bikes, skateboards, etc.)	6	Skate park, cycle track
<b>INCLUSIVITY</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Opportunities for disabled children to enjoy the same experiences as non-disabled children	4	Hammock swing, basket swing, inclusive swing, inclusive roundabout, giant revolving platform, wide slide