



PLANNING FOR A

PLAYFUL FUTURE



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INTRODUCTION

What is PLAY?

“Play is the universal language of childhood. It is through play that children understand each other and make sense of the world around them.

It is a process of observing, testing, trying, imitating, and enjoying the environment they are in and people they are with.

Play is what children naturally do when given freedom, time, and space.”

(Play Scotland)

Our Legal Obligations

Leeds City Council’s Commitment to Children’s Play (2019)

“Children playing contributes towards a ‘culture of childhood’ where childhood is recognised as distinct and valuable time and in Leeds we want to foster and afford children the opportunity, time and space to play independently and with others, recognising children playing as essential to a happy, health childhood.”

Child Friendly Leeds 12 Wishes: Wish 2

“Children and young people have safe spaces to play, hang out and have fun.



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 31

Article 31 1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. 2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

What do we already know?

(Leeds Play Sufficiency, 2023)

What is Play Sufficiency?

“Play sufficiency is about making sure children have enough **time, space and permission to play**. Sufficient opportunities for play are key to children’s enjoyment of the cities, towns and communities they live in and are an essential part of any child-friendly initiative. Through playing children actively influence their **physical health and mental well-being, development and enjoyment of life.**”

Play Sufficiency in Leeds

Leeds is the **first city in England to begin work on a Play Sufficiency Assessment**, following in the footsteps of Play Wales and Play Scotland. The Assessment is being led by Active Leeds, with the support of consultants from Ludicology, who provide advice, research and training to those working on children’s play.

What do we already know?

- 23.5% of children however rated their opportunities for play as only being average or poor (this equates to about 1 in 4 children).
- For many children, streets are the only available play space.
- Many children are not allowed to play out due to ‘risks’, including: a fear of older children, anti-social behaviour and dogs off leads, drug dealing and drug litter; poorly lit areas; speed of traffic.
- Children shared that they craved nature in their play spaces: trees to swing on, and things to collect such as pine cones and conkers.

About the Consultation

We consulted with 173 primary age children between school years 3 to 6, across 3 schools.

The three schools we consulted with were Cookridge Primary School, St Patrick's Catholic Primary School and Great Preston CofE Primary School. The map highlights where these schools are in the city.



We designed a Top Trumps style worksheet to encourage the children to share their voices in a creative and playful way.

We asked the children to name the place they play in most, rather than the place they like to play the most, in order to identify the most frequently used spaces for play across Leeds.

We then asked them to draw that space, and rate it out of 10 across seven different categories: Nature, Safety, Social, Imagination, Close to home, Active and Risk. These themes were chosen based on Play Sufficiency guidelines about creating playful spaces, and we wanted to find out how the children and young people view the spaces they play in the most.

Across the next few pages, you can see some of the example worksheets completed by some of the children we consulted with.

The place I play in most is

My place space looks like...

Nature ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Why?

Safety ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Why?

Social ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Why?

Imagination ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Why?

Close to home ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Why?

Active ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Why?

Risk ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Why?

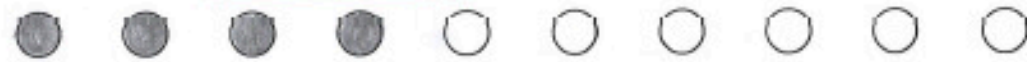
Activity Worksheets - Samples

The place I play in most is football pitch

My place space looks like...



Nature



Why? Because there aren't many trees

Safety



Why? Because if you get injured and none of you is there you can't do anything

Social



Why? Because all your friends could be there

Imagination



Why? Because you can only play football

Close to home



Why? Because my mum doesn't let me go that far

Active



Why? Because you do running and jumping

Risk



Why? Because if you know your playing against older kids they can be a bit rough

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, age 8

The place I play in most is the small park near my house

My place space looks like...



Nature



Why? A huge tree but not much plants

Safety



Why? Children could walk into nearby car park

Social



Why? Everytime I look out the window there's children playing

Imagination



Why? I like to imagine the tree is my huge house

Close to home



Why? I can open my gate and walk there

Active



Why? Not many children playing

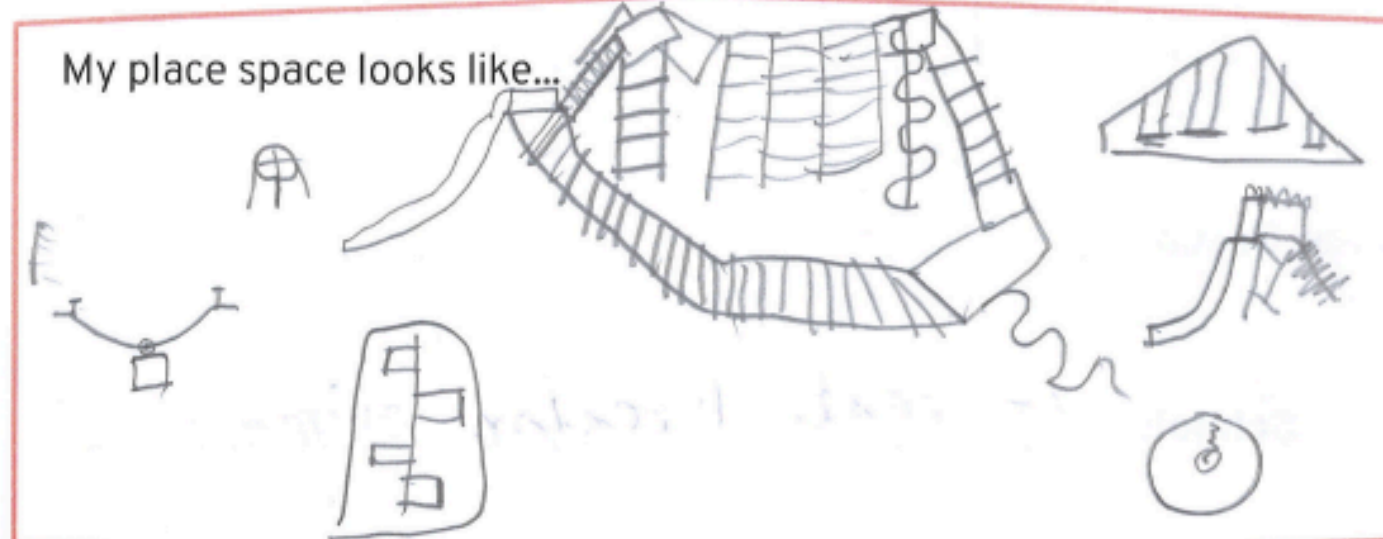
Risk



Why? Nearby car park is a danger to younger children because there's not many railings

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, age 10

The place I play in most is Allerton Bywaterpark



Nature

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

There is alot of houses but there is a field and a lake over the road.

Safety

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

There is a fence around it but there is a main road at the other end of the fence.

Social

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

There is not atnallways some body there but most of the time there is.

Imagination

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Beas * You could play like a monkey but nothing else really

Close to home

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Just a 2 minute drive from my house.

Active

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

You could run around it or ride a bike around it.

Risk

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

You cant really hurt yourself but you could fall of the swings.

Great Preston CofE Primary School, age 10

The place I play in most is Golder nacer park



Nature

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

There are trees leaves and Ducs

Safety

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

because I have never hurt myself

Social

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

because there are lots of people there

Imagination

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

because I pretend that I am in the jungle

Close to home

Why? ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

because I just go in my car

Active

Why? ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

because there is a hard slog

Risk

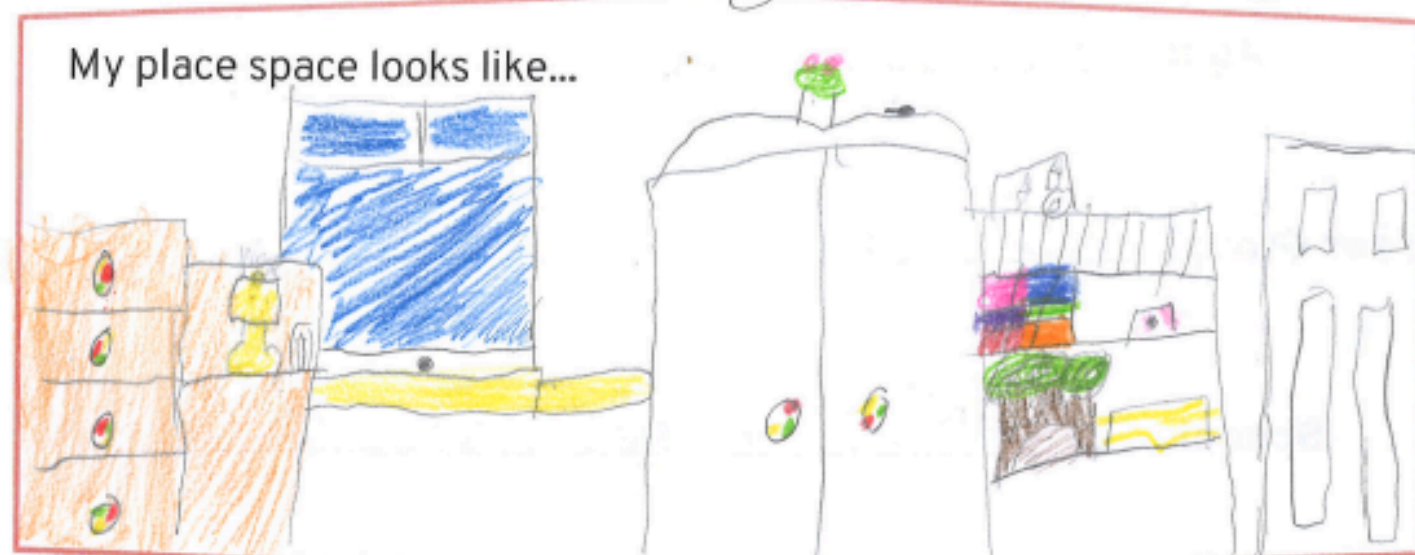
Why? ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

because you just walk

Cookridge Primary School, age 7



The place I play in most is my home in my bedroom



Nature



Why? None because it is my room and there is only one plant.

Safety



Why? is out of it because the only 2 ways in are my window and door.

Social



Why? Not really because it is in my bedroom so the only time it is in playdays.

Imagination



Why? yes because I pretend codes of things in my room.

Close to home



Why? yes because it is in my house.

Active



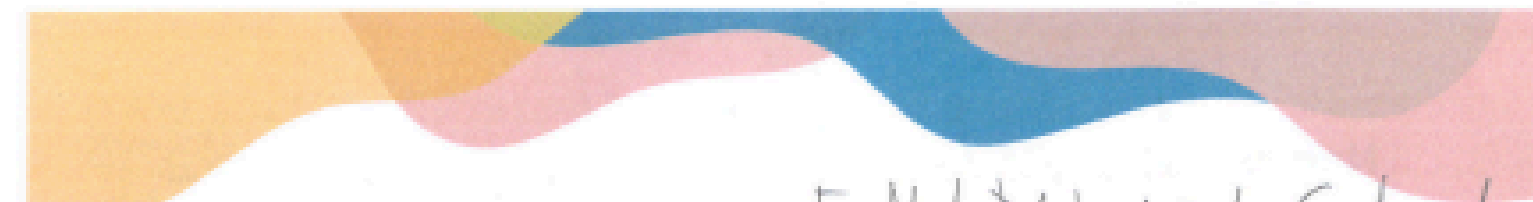
Why? No because I like reading but not active, that much.

Risk

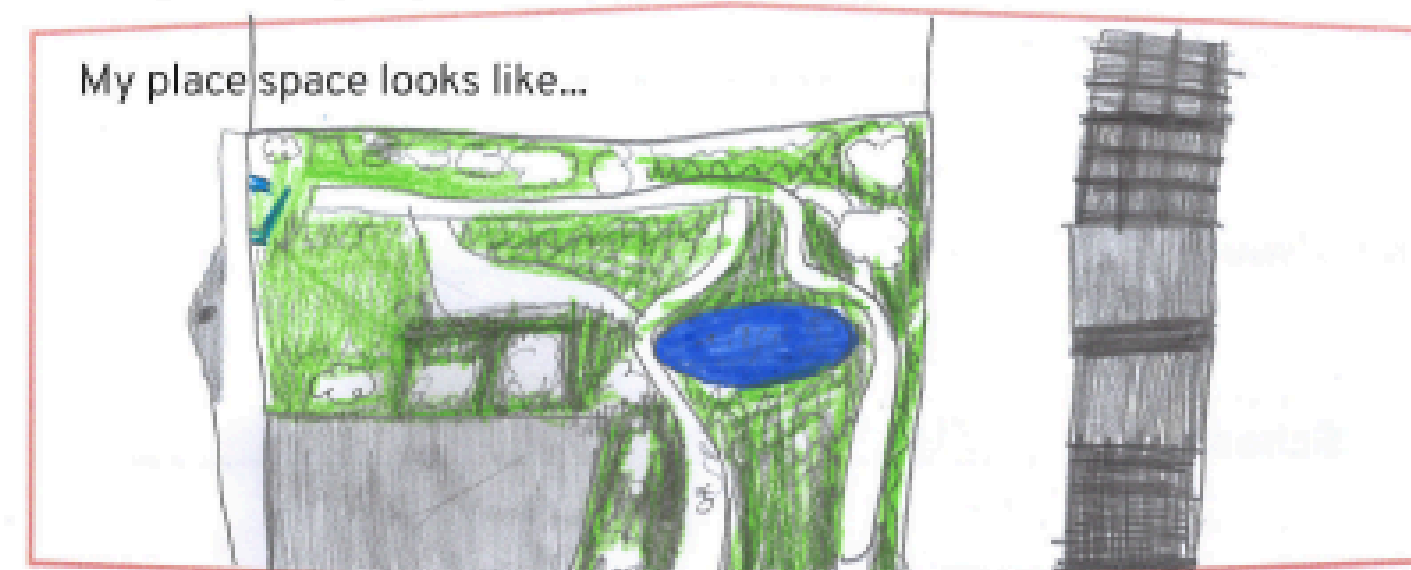


Why? No because it is my room.

Cookridge Primary School, age 8



The place I play in most is Felld & behind School



Nature



Why? Full of bushes, birds, trees, grass and a pond.

Safety



Why? Could fall in pond.

Social



Why? People walk there dogs and ride bikes there.

Imagination



Why? Play motor bikes and race my dog.

Close to home



Why? Just up the path.

Active



Why? lots of games to play

Risk




Why? Could fall in pond!

Great Preston CofE Primary School, age 10

The place I play in most is Tinsell top playground

My place space looks like



didn't have time to finish

Nature ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Why? because it is like a field with trees/flowers over to the Right

Safety ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○

Why? It been tested and there is securing measures

Social ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○

Why? You don't see that many people

Imagination ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○

Why? you can't really like wonder in this playground

Close to home ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○

Why? I leave near their

Active ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○

Why? not many fun thing to do because in my opinion it's a little kiddy

Risk ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○


Why? Cause you don't know people (stranger danger)

Control area

Cookridge Primary School, age 10

The place I play in most is My Garden

My place space looks like



Nature ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Why? Because there's only grass.

Safety ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Why? Because everything is protected and also if there's any meter or glass it is covered up or closed up.

Social ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Why? only the people that I know.

Imagination ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Why? Because it is very use full because thing there are sometimes look like things and you can use them very good.

Close to home ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Why? It is in my house Right behind it because it is my garden.

Active ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Why? You can jump on the trampoline and play football

Risk ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Why? Because nothing is wrong and it's Protected.

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, age 8

The “BEST” place

Once the children had completed their worksheets analysing their individual play spaces, we conducted a group discussion exercise to find out what would make the ‘best’ place to play in according to children.

Like with the worksheets, we went through each category one by one to keep the data focused on Play Sufficiency guidance. For example, we asked: “What makes a place a ten-out-of-ten for nature?”

The following pages will take you through each category, highlighting the key themes shared by children about what would make spaces in Leeds the best spaces for play.



You will notice we haven’t included a section dedicated to risk, even though that is one of the categories on the individual worksheets.

Throughout the individual exercises, many of the children found the concept of Risk to be a little abstract, and their responses often overlapped with the category of Safety.

We decided to remove risk from the Best Place group discussion to avoid confusion/overlapping answers. The issues we encountered were discussed with the project team for this consultation and we will look to find a new way to consult on the theme of Risk that is more engaging for the children and young people involved.

NATURE

Every child sees nature a bit differently. Here are a few drawings of some of the outdoor spaces that some of the children drew, alongside their descriptions of the spaces.



“Football pitch” - Burmantofts, age 8



“A huge tree but not much plants.”

“The small park near my house” - Burmantofts, age 11



“It’s just rocks and grass.”

“Tinsill Park” - Cookridge, age 10

“There are many trees and a farmer’s field next to it and grass.”



“St Aiden’s Park” - Great Preston, age 10



“There are trees, leaves and ducks.”

“Golden Acre park” - Cookridge, age 8

We asked the children “***What makes a space 10 out of 10 for nature?***”, and they told us these words and phrases.



SAFETY

CHILDREN FEEL SAFE WHEN...

**“There are safety
nets or soft ground
to land on.”**

**“There are safe
indoor spaces.”**

**“There’s no smoking,
vaping or drugs.”**

**“There are gates and
fences around an
area.”**

**“A space is clean -
no litter or broken
glass.”**

**“There is bike
storage.”**

**“There are people
there to help.”**

**“There are flood
lights/street lights.”**

**“There are different
zones for different
ages.”**



SOCIAL

This is what children tell us a **social** space looks and feels like.

“There are different activities and things to do.”

“It’s accessible.”

“There are lots of other people and kids around.”

“Somewhere that is in a central meeting space so everyone can get there.”

“There’s space to charge your phones.”

“There space to do sports and get exercise.”



“There are lots of swings so we can all play together at the same time.”

“I can hang out with my friends and my brothers.”

“There’s space where you can talk to each other.”

IMAGINATION

Imaginative play is less structured and provides a space for children and young people to roleplay scenarios. These are some of the examples that children shared about imaginative play.

art and graffiti



tyre parks



sticks and bricks



playboxes



architecture



building



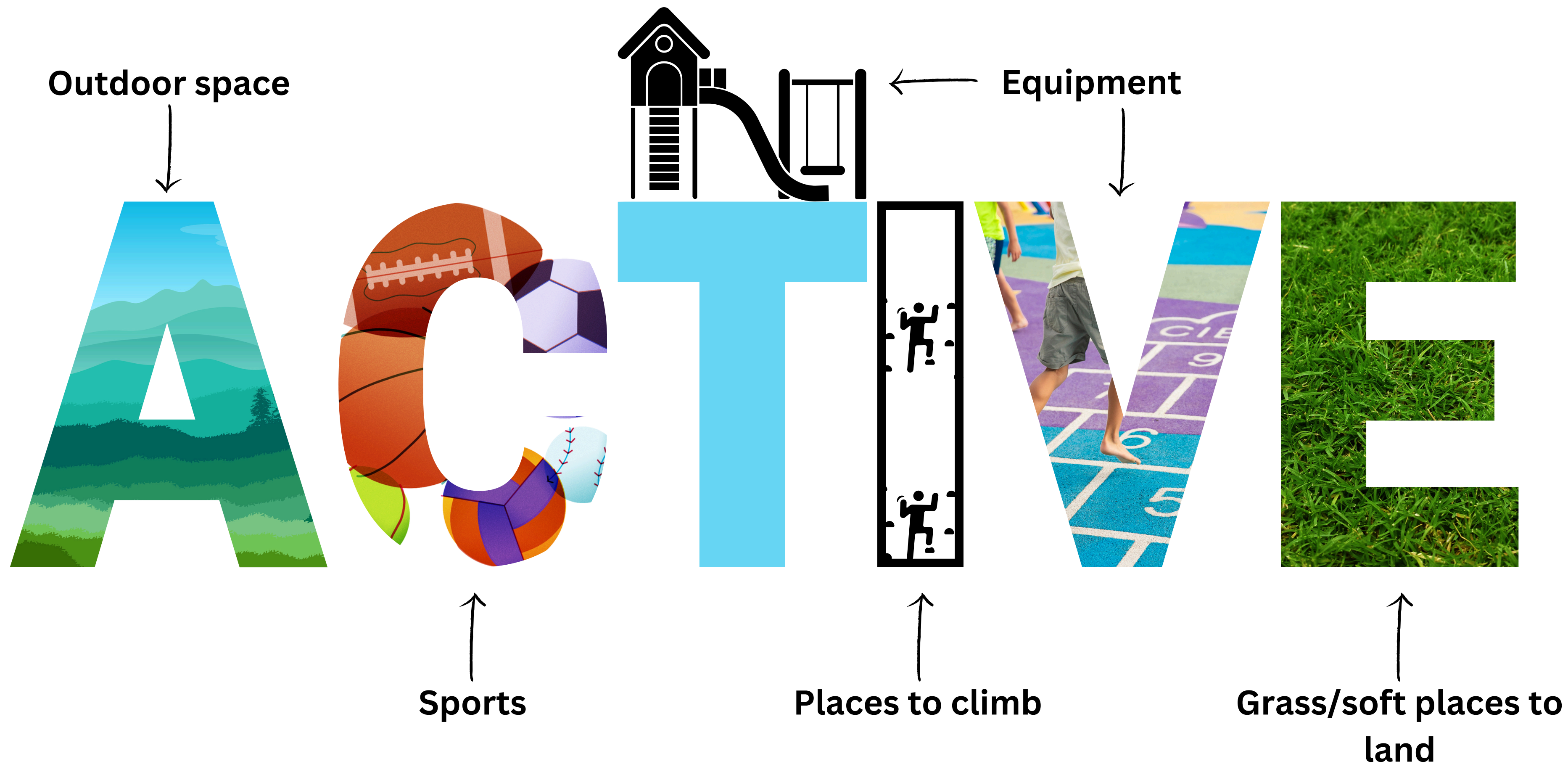
CLOSE TO HOME

“Close to home” can mean something different for every child and young person. Here’s what some of the children told us about what counts as “close to home”.



ACTIVE

Children and young people move and play in many different ways. Here's some examples of the ways they get “active”, as well as ideas for how spaces can promote children to become more “active”.



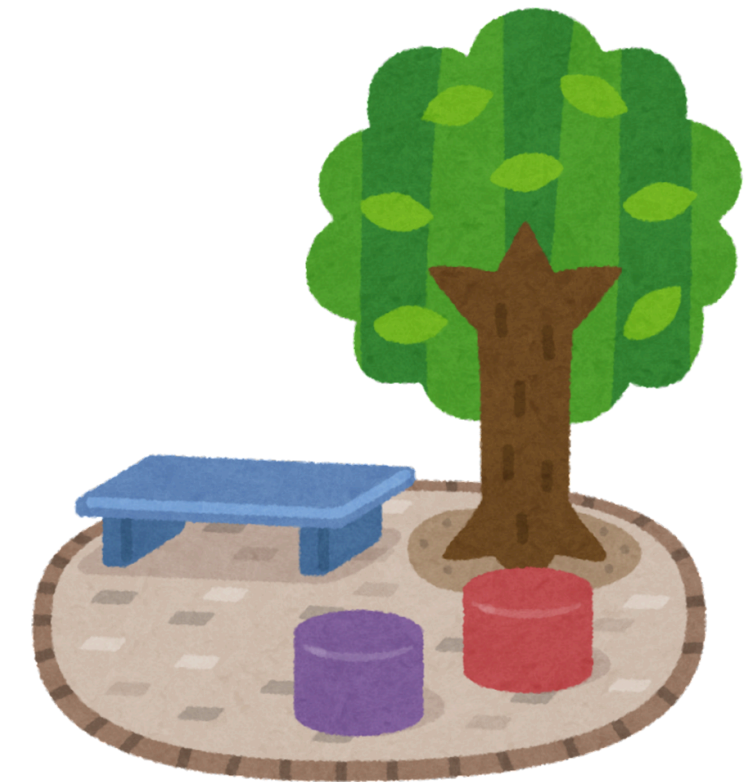
Problems with current play spaces

Finally, we asked the children and young people: “What DON’T you like about the spaces you play in?”. Here is what they told us:



EQUIPMENT

Equipment is too high
Maintenance / Refurbishment
Boring equipment
Uneven bike paths
Rusty/worn equipment
Lack of accessible spaces
Not enough space



PEOPLE

Strangers
No Wardens
Dog Walkers
Don't feel safe - teenagers













ENVIRONMENT

Big rocks you can trip over
Alcohol / Drugs / Vapes
Hard Ground
Litter / glass / dog poo
Autumn leaves and overgrown bushes
Darkness
Cars near the space

REACTIVE MEASURES

How should we react to improve access and opportunities to play in Leeds? Here are some key actions identified from the feedback from children and young people.

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
|  | Plenty of bike storage |  | Different zones of play for different ages |
|  | Cigarette/Vape disposal bins to reduce litter. |  | Security personnel, wardens and/or Play Rangers to keep spaces safe for play |
|  | Well-lit areas and better lighting to keep spaces safe all year round. |  | Safety measures such as nets, soft surfaces (like grass) and fences to keep children safe. |
|  | Clear timelines for maintenance and refurbishment of play equipment |  | Innovative equipment to encourage play, such as Playboxes and tyre obstacle courses |
|  | Cleaning/Maintenance logs for outdoor place spaces |  | Spaces designed for teenagers to ensure all ages have appropriate spaces to play and hang out |