



# Play Sufficiency Assessment

March 2025



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North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

# Play Sufficiency Assessment

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## Acknowledgements

It is with great thanks to Ironside Farrar who produced the technical report, carried out site visits and produced benchmark standards to determine the sufficiency of play opportunities in North Ayrshire.

# 1 Introduction

North Ayrshire Council has produced a Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) to assess the suitability of play opportunities within North Ayrshire. The Council is required to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children in preparing an evidence report by Section 16D of Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended. The PSA will inform the Council's forthcoming Local Development Plan (LDP).

The assessment will help the LDP accord with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), particularly Policy 21: Play Recreation and Sport. The assessment will also help the Council meet its statutory requirements placed under The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and The Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023. NPF4 states that LDPs should be based on an understanding of the needs and demand in the community and informed by the planning authority's Play Sufficiency Assessment and [Open Space Strategy](#).

This report brings together several pieces of work, including an Audit Technical Report on Play and an Open Space Audit conducted by Ironside Farrar. The PSA has also been informed by consultation with young people and stakeholders, to be able to reflect the experience of those who play in North Ayrshire. A separate Engagement Report has been prepared.

## Why play is important

Through play, children and young people can explore the world around them in a creative and engaging way. Research shows that children experience a range of health, wellbeing, developmental and educational benefits from outdoor play, and through learning in and connecting with nature. We are keen that children in North Ayrshire have good access to play opportunities throughout the area.

## How we assessed play sufficiency

The PSA brings together several pieces of work to comprehensively tell the story of how children experience play in North Ayrshire. The project followed the following timeline:

- 2022 – Ironside Farrar consultants prepare an updated Open Space Audit
- 2024 – Ironside Farrar consultants conduct a technical assessment of the three components of a PSA, namely quality, quantity and accessibility and sets standards for those.
- 2024 – over a period of six months, North Ayrshire Council Officers put together a consultation strategy, to engage with children and stakeholders to better understand the experience of playing in North Ayrshire.
- 2025 – Play Sufficiency Assessment report finalised.

In addition to the above, the Council's Planning Service has worked with the Council's Streetscene team who look after Council-owned play parks. The Streetscene team have carried out their own consultation and engagement regarding play parks and the feedback collected has shaped the PSA.

#### **Four Components of the Play Sufficiency Assessment**

To assess the suitability of play opportunities in North Ayrshire, the PSA is split into four components:

1. **Quantity assessment** – how many play opportunities are there in North Ayrshire?
2. **Quality assessment** – what level of experience do these opportunities offer? And to who, are these spaces accessible to all?
3. **Accessibility assessment** – using an accessibility standard, assessing the informal and formal play opportunities within a reasonable wheeling, walking or cycling distance and how easy it is to access these, considering traffic, physical barriers and how children with disabilities can access the space.
4. **Consultation** – how do people (children and young people, parents/carers, visitors and community bodies such as Community Councils) feel about playing in North Ayrshire.

The chapters that follow contain detailed analysis of the four components and bring these together with a conclusion for each locality of North Ayrshire and an overall statement of sufficiency of play opportunities. The assessment also suggests a standard to measure sufficiency of play opportunities in each area. These standards



have also been informed by various consultation activities ensure rounded assessment of play sufficiency in North Ayrshire.

## 2 Setting a Play Standard in North Ayrshire

Setting standards allows a better understanding of the current provision of play assets across a local authority area. These standards will inform the Local Development Plan process and provide a benchmark to monitor progress in improving the opportunities for play. The starting point for setting the play standards was the Council's open space standards. The open space standard was established via the Open Space Strategy and was used in the Council's latest Open Space Audit ([North Ayrshire Council Open Space Audit 2022](#)). The open space quantity and quality standards were identified by benchmarking relative to open space guidance (Scottish Government / Fields in Trust / Greenspace Scotland) and standards set by other local authorities. The accessibility standards have been taken from the Open Space Strategy for North Ayrshire (2010) and the Strategy for Children's Play in North Ayrshire (2006).

The Scottish Government Planning Guidance for Play Sufficiency Assessment highlights the requirement to assess play areas by quality, quantity and accessibility. To meet this requirement, standards have been created for those three elements. Each of the standards should be considered as a whole to assess the suitability of play opportunities in North Ayrshire

The focus of the assessment has been the equipped formal play spaces, being those play spaces that are specifically for play (equipped play space / facilities for young people). North Ayrshire's towns and villages have a wealth of parks, neighbourhood open spaces, semi-natural woodlands, beaches and access to the countryside, which all provide opportunities for informal play. The equipped play spaces have been mapped alongside the 2021 Open Space Audit sites to illustrate the connections between the various types of open space. The value of these open spaces for informal play spaces has been identified through the consultation.

The North Ayrshire play standards are as follows:

## **Play quantity**

The 2021 Open Space Audit included an assessment of the quantity of open space per house unit or head of population, by the application of a quantity standard.

Currently, there is no UK wide quantity standard for the provision of equipped play areas for the various age groups. North Ayrshire have adopted the Fields in Trust categorisation of the equipped play spaces according to neighbourhood and local hierarchies, distribution across settlements and distances to the play facilities. For North Ayrshire, we have set a standard of 1 play area per 1,000 people.

## **Play quality**

Quality of the play opportunities can be considered by demonstrating fitness for purpose in meeting the enjoyment, social and developmental needs of children; and the contribution the play space makes to the overall quality of the place in which it is located. The Play Quality standard was based on the criteria set in [Play Scotland's 'Getting it Right for Play' toolkit](#). The Play Quality Standard set provides an overall score with three outcomes: good provision, acceptable provision and underperforming. More Information on this is included in the Quality Assessment below and in the Technical Audit Report.

## **Play accessibility**

The accessibility standard is an amount of a particular type of open space within a specified distance, i.e. a distance threshold. The accessibility standards for publicly usable open space have been taken from the Open Space Strategy for North Ayrshire (2010). The accessibility standards for equipped play facilities have been taken from the Open Space Strategy for North Ayrshire (para. 43) and the Strategy for Children's Play in North Ayrshire (2006).

With regards to accessibility of play spaces for people with disabilities and limited mobility, the PSA has included observations for 99 play areas with regards to inclusion recommendations and identifies path access and repair / barriers / specialist equipment etc. to ensure safe and ease of access by most. Appendix 1 of the Technical Report includes the accessibility / inclusivity assessment information.

# 3 Play Sufficiency Assessment

The Play Sufficiency Assessment is made up of a quantity, quality and an accessibility assessment and influenced by the consultation. The next few sections detail those components, and more detail is contained within the Technical Audit Report and Consultation Report.

## Quantity assessment

### Methodology

The quantity assessment identified the different play opportunities in North Ayrshire. The overall term for play opportunities used in the PSA is 'play spaces.' These can vary in size and be formal or informal, some with equipment and other spaces that might not have been intended for play but are used as such and are valued by those playing in them.

The Council's Open Space Audit and PSA consultation process identified the different types of play spaces in North Ayrshire. These and their definitions are:

- **Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)** – these are larger areas that typically contain both formal and informal recreational opportunities for play. These spaces should have facilities in them for children 0-17, providing play equipment, a hard surface area for ball games or wheeled activities such as roller skating or cycling. They may also have facilities for meeting and socialising. The Fields in Trust (FiT) guidance recommends a minimum of 9 play experiences per NEAP.
- **Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)** – these include areas of open space that are designed typically for children aged 0-11 years with features and equipment for children who are beginning to play independently close to where they live. These are smaller than NEAPs and should contain a minimum of 6 play experiences.
- **Local Area for Play (LAP)** - these areas are typically open spaces that are specifically designed and maintained for play but do not always have formal equipment within them or have as much equipment as a LEAP may have.

- **Natural Play Space** – these spaces are quite often more informal and part of other spaces such as woodland, urban forestry and in some public realm area. These creative play areas are not restricted to equipment or spaces that are specially designed for play.
- **Activity zones for 12+ years** – examples of these facilities which provide play for older children, include Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), skate parks and fitness/trim trails. These zones are sometimes part of other open spaces or natural areas.

The assessment identified 134 formal equipped play spaces. GIS mapping is used to show both privately managed and council owned play facilities.

The total play spaces across North Ayrshire are:

- 96 council owned
- 38 privately owned

There are 124 equipped play spaces catering for the 0 to 4 age group (typically LAPs or LEAPs) and 81 play spaces for the 5 to 11 age group (typically LEAPs), demonstrating that there is good overall provision of play for nursery and primary school aged children.

There are 30 equipped play spaces for the 12 to 15 age groups (typically larger LEAPs and NEAPs), which can include equipment designed for older children and often located within a play area or including MUGAs or skate parks (NEAPs).

There are 13 facilities which may attract use by the 16 to 17 age group, which might include MUGAs, fitness equipment, skateparks and youth shelters.



The Map below shows where 124 play spaces are located within North Ayrshire.

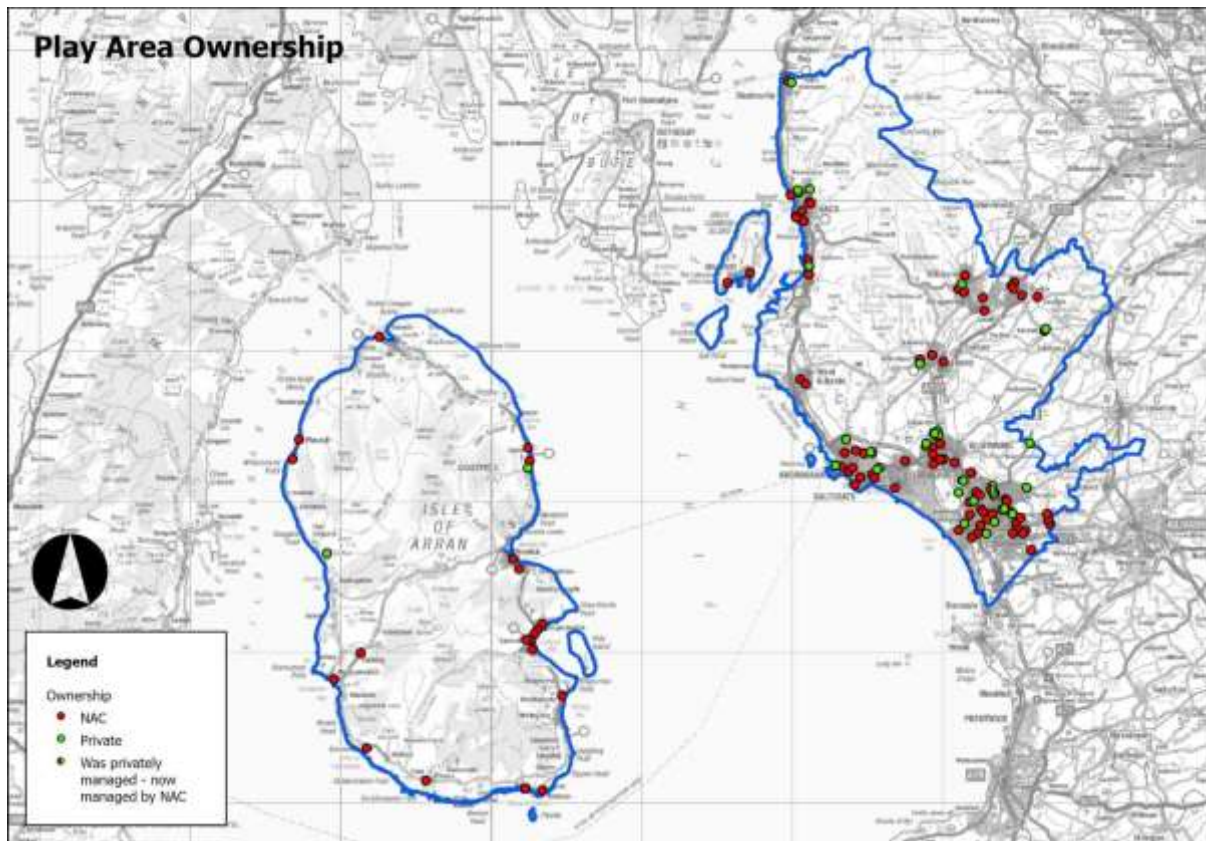


Figure 1: Map showing private and council owned equipped play areas.

The graph below shows types of equipped play spaces, grouped by locality,

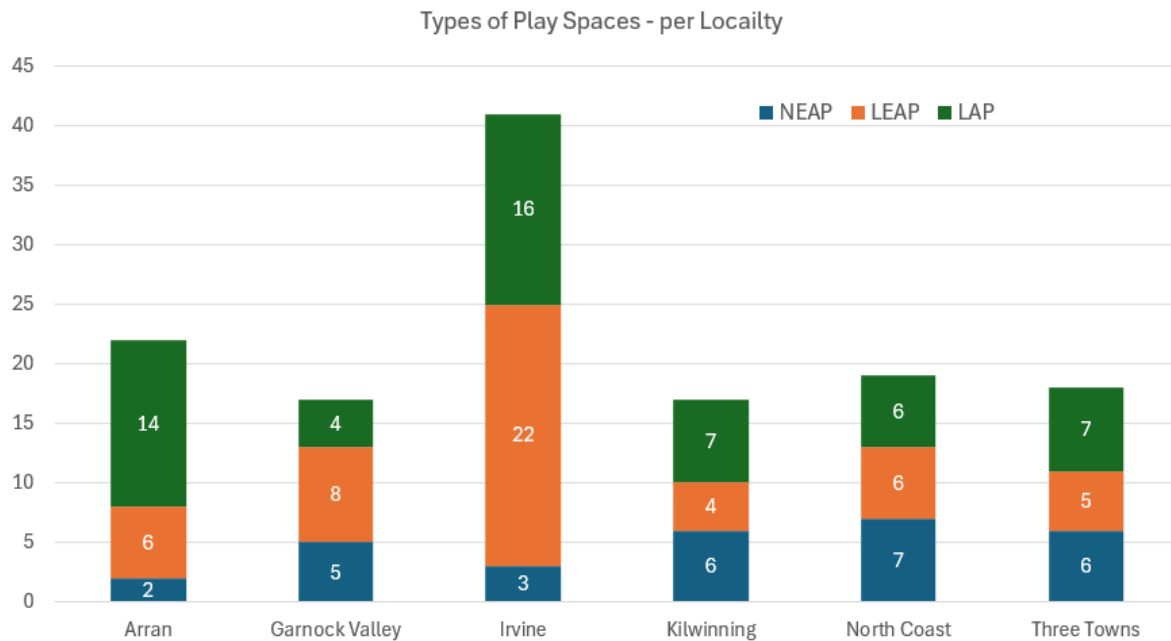


Figure 2: Graph showing the number and type of play spaces by locality

### Play Spaces by settlement

The following table provides information regarding the settlements of North Ayrshire and the play spaces within those towns and villages. The table also illustrates the total area of open space and how many areas are classed as the most deprived according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The number of play spaces that are in close proximity to deprived areas is a useful benchmark that will be monitored in future play sufficiency assessments to ensure that access is evenly distributed throughout North Ayrshire. The table below also shows which type of play spaces are close to the most deprived areas as per the SIMD.

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Population</b> (GROSS 2022)	<b>Number of Play Spaces</b>	<b>Number of Play Spaces per 1,000 population</b>	<b>Total Area of Open Space</b> (from OSA) (ha)	<b>Number of SIMD5 data zones</b> (20% most deprived)	<b>SIMD Proximity to play spaces</b>
Ardrossan	10,332	7	0.7	81.35	7	LEAP and NEAPs
Beith, Barmill, Gateside	5,761	7	1.2	72.36	3	LEAP and NEAPs
Cumbrae, Millport	1,173	2	1.2	73.93	1	NEAP in the area
Dalry	5,273	4	0.8	28.63	4	LEAP and NEAPs
Fairlie	1,536	3	2	162.94	0	N/A
Irvine , Dreghorn and Springside	33,998 3,357 1,133	33 5 3	1 1.5 2.6	1350.96 19.59 3.42	23	Areas east of the river are not within easy distance. Will be provided at the new Beach Park
Isle of Arran (all settlements)	2,690	22	8.2	227.25	0	N/A
Kilbirnie	7,098	6	0.8	111.44	5	LEAP and NEAP
Kilwinning	16,211	17	1	302.40	12	Central areas are close to the

Settlement	Population (GROSS 2022)	Number of Play Spaces	Number of Play Spaces per 1,000 population	Total Area of Open Space (from OSA) (ha)	Number of SIMD5 data zones (20% most deprived)	SIMD Proximity to play spaces
						Community Sports Hub. SIMD areas at Fergushill Road and Woodwynd are not close to play areas
Largs	10,917	10	0.9	197.14	2	LEAP and NEAP
Saltcoats	12,165	9	0.7	38.27	8	LEAP and NEAP
Skelmorlie	2,070	2	0.9	69.00	0	N/A
Stevenston	8,646	2	0.2	323.63	10	NEAP at Ardeer, but at a distance from most SIMD areas. Ardchoille centre LEAP is limited in appeal and at a distance.
West Kilbride	4,862	2	0.4	83.22	0	N/A

Table 1: Play areas per settlement population

## Key Findings

When the total population of the settlements is compared with the number of all types of play space, there is an average of approximately one play area per 1,000 people. Applying this standard to the provision of total number of all play spaces in every settlement, suggests that most settlements provide one or more play spaces per 1,000 population. However, Stevenston falls significantly below, with only two play areas for a population of 8,646. West Kilbride also falls short, with two play spaces for a population of 4,862. Saltcoats, Dalry and Ardrossan also are less well

provided for with regards number of play spaces. The mapped assessment and accessibility assessment in Section 5.4 provides a geographical analysis of provision.

There is a good distribution of equipped play spaces across North Ayrshire's localities relative to the size of the settlements. However, with regards to the number of play spaces per population Stevenston, West Kilbride, Saltcoats, Dalry and Ardrossan have fewer play spaces than other settlements.

## Quality assessment

### Methodology

The assessment of the quality of the play resource has been based on the recommendations included in the PSA Regulations, with reference to Play Scotland's "Getting it Right for Play" toolkit. The scoring system is based on the Characteristics of Play Indicative Tool criteria, that recognises different types and ways to play that are suited or preferred by children from different age groups. The 'spirit' of the guidance has been followed, as some play elements are not always desirable in a particular site (e.g. water play, sand play, skating). The toolkit has enabled assessors to carry out a qualitative analysis of the current play area resource, taking into account description of the play opportunity, associated infrastructure, provision for different ages and abilities. Only the formal play spaces have been quality assessed using the PSA assessment tool.

The Quality Toolkit included a scoring system for the play areas based on the Characteristics of Play and the following criteria:

**Place quality / design:** the open space context, accessibility of the site and other qualities.

- **Location** - The location of the play area in context of the open space within which it is set, the path connections providing access to the site, and whether it is overlooked and in a safe location.
- **Design** - The overall design of the site has been considered, with regards to its landscape setting, informal play opportunities, paths / seating and condition of the open space.

**Play opportunity / experience:** characteristics of Play set out in the draft

Regulations have been listed, in order to assess:

- **physical play opportunity** - for example, space to run, chase, skip, hop and jump
- **creative play opportunity** - for example, building dens or structures
- **social play opportunity** - for example, places to socialise and meet friends

Not all play spaces were scored. All council-owned and managed sites were scored but 26 private sites were not scored. This was due to a mix of resources in the assessment project and the ability for the council to influence decisions relating to management of those spaces. It may be within the scope of future Play Sufficiency Assessments.

### **Assessment**

From the 108 play spaces scored, the following numbers of sites fell into the various scoring bands. 10 sites were identified as underperforming, and the majority (60% of the sites) were considered to be good provision. Note: while privately owned play spaces were not included in the quality audit they have been included in the mapping and overall assessment of provision.

The chart below illustrates the average quality scores across each of the Localities, the average quality score being 64.5%. Irvine has the lowest average quality score, with the Isle of Arran falling just below the average quality score. Kilwinning and Garnock Valley localities have the highest average quality score.



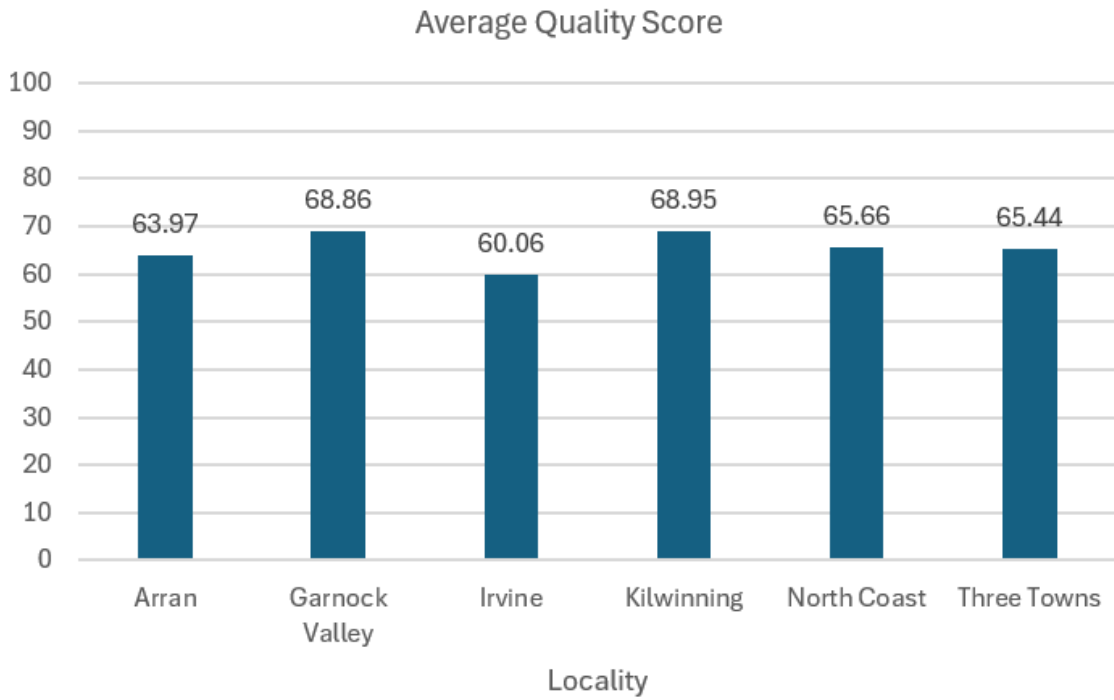


Figure 3: Graph showing average quality score of play areas by locality

The Map below shows the location of the play parks in North Ayrshire and indicates their quality score.

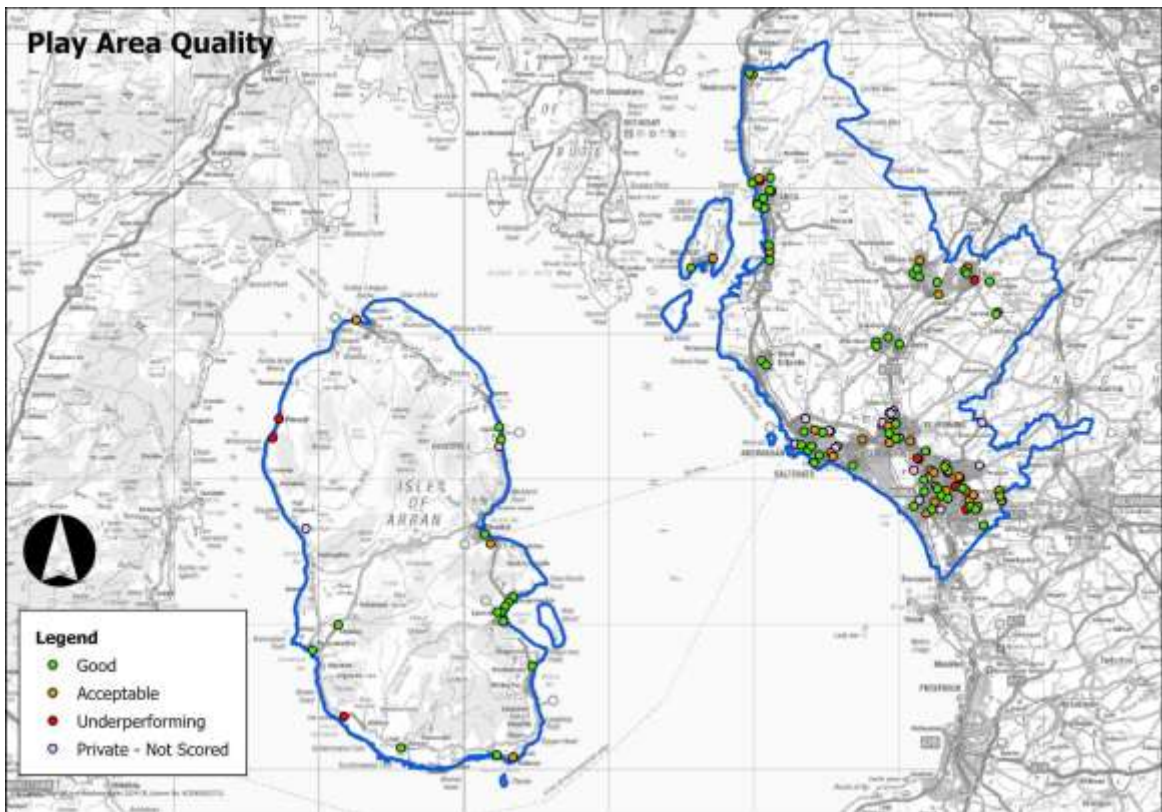


Figure 4:Map showing location of play areas with quality score

## **Key findings**

Quality of play space provision is well spread throughout the Council area, with all settlements containing play spaces considered good or acceptable in terms of their quality. All settlements have a good provision of open space that is considered acceptable or good. There were 10 sites are assessed as underperforming, including sites in Arran Garnock Valley, Irvine and North Coast.

More information on quality including the individual scores is available in the PSA Audit Technical Report and its appendixes.

## **Accessibility assessment**

### **Methodology**

Play space mapping was prepared, illustrating the hierarchy, location, distribution and accessibility of formal play spaces within the urban areas. The mapping prepared in 2021 was refreshed as part of the open space audit. The following section sets out the summary analysis of the accessibility of the play spaces in the North Ayrshire settlements.

### **Assessment**

The map below summarises the number of the various types of play spaces for each age group in each settlement, the ownership and the sites containing all abilities equipment.

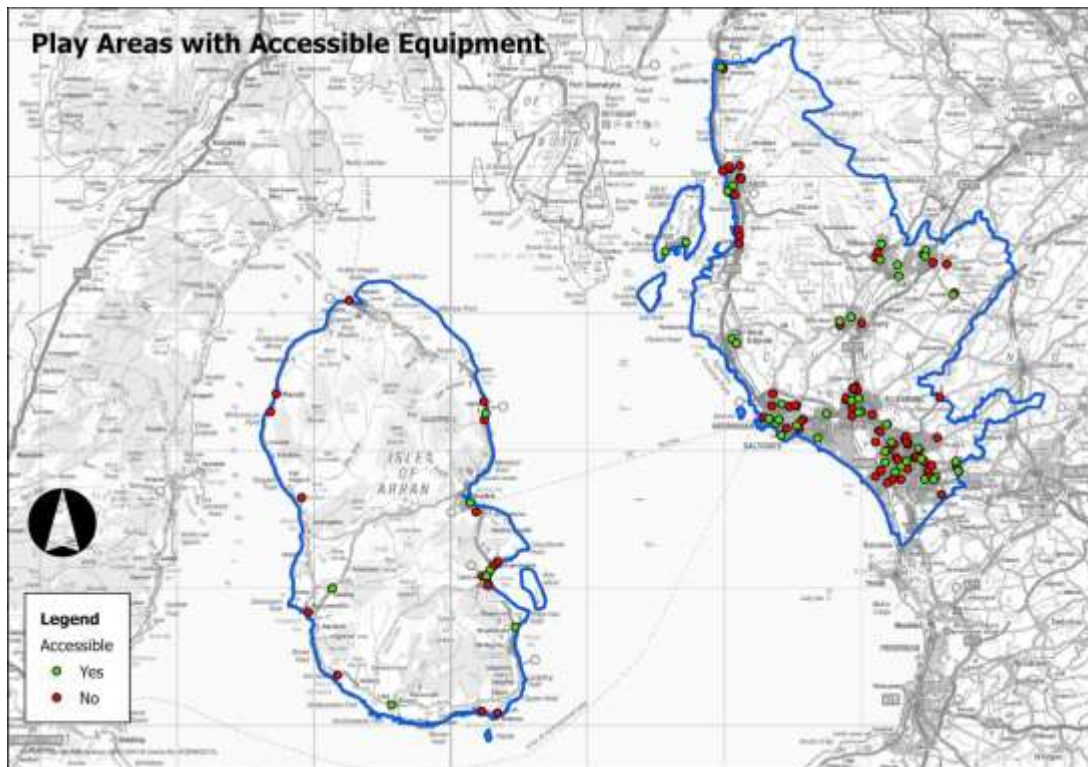


Figure 5: Map showing areas with accessible play equipment

## Key findings

The following observations of play area accessibility, informed by the mapping, can be made:

### North Coast Locality

**Fairlie** village is well provided for in terms of access to play space, with a NEAP centrally located Castlepark Drive. The catchment for this park covers nearly all the village, providing a range of play, sports and recreational facilities for the community. There is a smaller play facility at Main Road to the north, providing a recently upgraded LEAP.

**Largs** is well provided for in terms of access to play space, with a range of NEAPs, LEAPs and LAPs distributed across the town. Mackerston play area and skatepark provide a range of facilities for children and young people of all ages, located close to the heart of the town and the beach.

**Skelmorlie** village is well provided for in terms of access to play space, with one main centrally located park called Innes park, with a NEAP providing a range of play opportunities. Only the residential areas to the south of Skelmorlie are not within

easy access of the local park. However, the nature of these seafront developments as retirement apartments and large houses will lessen the need for accessible play facilities. Attractive beaches are just a short walk from this area.

In terms of accessibility to play space **West Kilbride** is reasonably well provided for, with a NEAP at The Glen and a LEAP at Kirkton Avenue. However, there are only two play areas in the settlement and the southern parts of West Kilbride and Seamill are not within 400m of The Glen play facility.

**Isle of Cumbrae:** The village of **Millport** is well provided for in terms of access to play spaces, with a NEAP and LEAP in the village and access to the beach and waterfront promenade.

### **Three Towns Locality**

Access to play provision is variable in **Ardrossan**, with the larger, better equipped play areas in the town centre and along the promenade providing diverse play opportunities. However, the peripheral areas of Chapelhill, to the north west of the town are not within the 400m catchment of Central Avenue LEAP and the beach and its associated facilities are at a distance from the residential area.

Access to play provision is good overall in **Saltcoats**, with a range of NEAPs, LEAPs and LAPs throughout the residential areas and the waterfront. The proximity to Ardrossan and Stevenston suggests that the range of play spaces in the 3 towns will be accessed by residents from all parts of the towns. For example, the Evolution Skatepark, Auchendarvie Leisure Centre will probably draw people from all parts of the 3 towns, due to the location next to the leisure centre and the size of the facility.

The town of **Stevenston** has 1 NEAP and 1 LEAP, providing a range of equipped play facilities at Stevenston Shore and at the Ardchoille Centre. The proximity of the play spaces in neighbouring Saltcoats will probably be used by residents of Stevenston. However, the residential areas around Hawkhill to the north are not within the 400m catchment of the Ardchoille centre play space, which has limited play opportunities.

## **Garnock Valley Locality**

The main residential area in the heart of **Beith** is well served in terms of accessibility to formal equipped play provision with Beith Public Park providing a NEAP for the town. The LEAPs at Ash Drive and Larch Terrace also provide access to neighbourhood play provision. There is a LAP at **Gateside** School, providing facilities for young children. **Barmill** contains a LEAP and a LAP in the heart of the village. The recently installed play space at Lochshore Hub will provide high quality play space for all ages, connected by a network of walking / cycling routes.

The main residential area in the heart of **Dalry** is well served in terms of play provision with Dalry Public Park providing a NEAP equipped play facility for the town. There are LEAPs at West Kilbride Road and Stoophill Crescent, providing play space for the peripheral residential areas.

The main part of **Kilbirnie** is well served in terms of accessibility to the centrally located Kilbirnie Public Park NEAP and Place View Park LEAP. The residential areas to the north at Redheugh are not within 400 metres of the LEAP play area at Pundeavon Avenue or other play areas in Kilbirnie. This area has only a large amenity greenspace along its eastern edge. The residential area of Redheugh contains a play space at Pundeavon Avenue, which serves the southern section of this community. The recently installed play space at Lochshore Hub will provide high quality play space for all ages, connected by a network of walking / cycling routes.

## **Irvine Locality**

**Irvine, Dreghorn** and **Springside** are well served in terms of equipped play space provision with a variety of NEAPs, LEAPs and LAPs set within the network of parks and open spaces providing a range of play, sports and open space opportunities. With regard to play facilities, the area to the east of the A78 contains a range of NEAPs, LEAPs and LAPs, providing good local and neighbourhood provision. However, the residential areas at Lawthorn, to the north, do not have access to equipped play spaces within 400m. To the west of the A78 the provision is not as comprehensive. There is only 1 NEAP, but 9 LEAPs and number of LAPs. Some small pockets of the residential areas at Perceton, to the north east of the town, are not within easy reach of play facilities. The all abilities play facility in Eglinton Park provides a range of play facilities for children of all ages, to the north of the town.

## **Kilwinning Locality**

**Kilwinning:** Most residential areas in the town are well served in terms of equipped play space provision with NEAPs and a skatepark at the centrally located Sports Club, Brodick Close and McGavin Park. There are LEAPs at Whitehurst Park, Dirrans and Stobbs Crescent, providing local play opportunity to the surrounding residential areas. The river, the railway lines and the main roads running through the town can act as significant barriers to access to this open space. The residential area to the west of the town at Corsehill do not have access to equipped play spaces within 400m. The all abilities play facility in Eglinton Park provides a range of play facilities for children of all ages, to the south of the town.

## **Isle of Arran Locality**

The nature of the settlement patterns on **Arran**, with its disparate small villages and clachans, makes establishing access to functional open space a challenge. However, the presence of an extensive path network around the island, access to places of historic and natural interest, access along beaches and coastal walks may lessen the need for formal play and park facilities. The scenic quality of the natural environment provides many places to explore, walk and have fun. The 3 main villages on the island are well served in terms of play space provision.

# **4 Engagement**

To ensure that a wide range of stakeholders had an opportunity to reflect on their experience of play in North Ayrshire, an extensive consultation programme was designed. This consisted of numerous events and online promotions and surveys. The Council's Youth Participation Officer and team was crucial in designing the consultation.

Below is a summary of the methods and key findings of the consultation programme. Full details and analysis of the response of each of the consultation activities can be found in the consultation report.



## **Engagement Activities**

### **Council Youth Cabinet – Saltcoats Town Hall**

On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024, over 100 Secondary School pupils, representing each school in North Ayrshire took part in a series of joint meetings with senior decision makers of the Council, Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Youth Executive. Key themes arising from the event include in general, there is not enough benches or places to rest in areas where people play and the feelings that young people are not always welcome and free to play as they please. Other prominent thoughts include that more bins should be provided to deter litter.

Overall, it was welcomed that a lot of the play parks have seen new equipment be installed but still feel that these areas are more for younger, primary or pre-school aged children. Several informal play or hang out spaces were identified which will be highlighted in the assessment, some examples include the dragon on Irvine beach and the riverside at Dreghorn.

Attendees were also provided with a QR code so that they could add some of their thoughts in their own time. A full transcript is provided with further detail of thoughts collected at the Youth Cabinet in the consultation report.

### **Council Primary 7 Youth Forum**

On 22 March 2024, 135 Primary School pupils with at least one primary from each locality took part in the Primary 7 youth forum. Key themes arising from the forum include that most children are happy and enjoy spending time outdoors. Participants are asked what type of play areas they liked best and what they liked about them. The children were also asked if they could change one thing what would it be about their area. Concerns did arise however from many groups that a lot of rubbish in the play areas were attracting seagulls which made young people feel unsafe. As with the Youth Cabinet, several spaces which children play that haven't been historically recorded were noted and will be highlighted in the PSA.

A full transcript of the notes of the workshop and some photographs is included in the consultation report.

## **Youth Clubs Engagement**

Planning Officers sought participation from youth clubs across all localities. Often discussions and engagements were led by Youth workers to promote greater feedback. However, one youth group requested a drop-in session with planning officers to further discuss their views on Play in the Garnock Valley. Key themes arising include that it was felt that there are enough play parks in the town but sometimes feel unsafe. The good amount of other natural spaces was highlighted as being important such as Kilbirnie Place Golf Club, Kilbirnie Lochshore and Tianna waterfall. There were quite a few concerns that they sometimes feel unsafe in play areas due to some antisocial activities from adults.

The other groups, indicated that they would have the discussions between the groups and fill out the Play Sufficiency Surveys, details of which can be found in the following paragraph.

## **Play Sufficiency Assessment Surveys**

Guided by youth working groups, four separate surveys, designed to be accessible for children of different ages, parents of pre-school aged children and other stakeholders such as Community Councils were created. As stated above, the surveys were shared with youth groups, schools and published on the Council's dedicated Local Development Plan engagement website. The council also published a press release to promote the survey. The Surveys attracted just under 300 responses. A short summary of some of the key points raised from each survey is below. Full analysis of these is contained within the Consultation Report.

### **Primary School age children survey**

Children were asked what their favourite park was and if this was their closest park. 60% of the 139 responses said that their favourite park was also their closest park. The children were also asked what they liked and didn't like about their parks. Common responses included that they liked that they could play with friends and that it was easy to get to. Some of the common things they didn't like was that it was boring and that a lot of the equipment was broken. Children were also asked if they play anywhere that does not have play equipment. Most respondents indicated that

they enjoy playing in the more natural areas, often close to the play areas. Nearly a quarter of respondents highlighted the beach as being a favourite play area.

### **Secondary School age children survey**

Secondary school age children were asked similar questions to the primary school aged children however, used slightly different language to suit an older audience. 43 young people responded to this survey which is less than the primary school aged return rate. Similarly to primary school aged children, things that they liked about their nearest space was that it was easy to get to and the things they didn't like were that there wasn't enough to do and the park is scruffy. Secondary school children were also asked what they would change about their spaces. Common answers included that they would like to see better opportunities for sports. They were also asked what types of spaces they like to spend time in. Most common answer was parks, closely followed by the beach, MUGAs or natural spaces such as woods. Less common answers include outside the shops.

### **Parents, and stakeholders survey**

112 parents, cares and stakeholders responded to the survey. They were asked was to name the places where children and young people go to play, hang out or play sport, close to where they live. The parents/carers were also asked where children liked to play (formal or informal) which returned similar responses to the secondary school children, with parks being the most common answer with natural spaces such as the beach also being a popular answer. When asked what they would change about their spaces, some of the common themes included traffic safety and age-appropriate equipment for all children. As with the other surveys, being a place to play and meet friends was cited as being the best thing about their spaces and that they were easy to get to.

### **Community Council Survey**

The survey was shared with all active Community Councils in North Ayrshire. After the deadline had past, an offer was also made to Community Councils for an Officer to attend a meeting to discuss the assessment and to gather views to ensure as many Community Councils were able to give a view as possible. 5 Community Councils responded to the consultation after two direct approaches to respond via

direct email. The common themes coming out of the survey include that green spaces should be protected and anything that could be done to avoid antisocial behaviour should be supported.

### **Play Park Renewal Programme and Engagement**

The Council is currently undertaking an ambitious programme to update each of its 95 Play Parks. As part of this work, the Council's Streetscene team engaged with young people, schools, community councils and other stakeholders via an online survey. Just under 800 people responded to the survey. Key themes arising from that survey is that most respondents (625 out of 789) felt the equipment in the play park they use most often is not inclusive to all users. More respondents also indicated that they thought their most visited play area did not have a sufficient variety of equipment with 617 people stating they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that there is a good variety of equipment. Other things to take from the survey include that the thing people would like to see the most in all play parks is benches, in particular accessible picnic benches with 231 people making that suggestion.

### **Overall conclusions from engagement**

Across the different methods of engagement, a wide range of views were collected. However, it is considered that the following trends were apparent.

- **The experience of playing in North Ayrshire varies depending on age and gender** – those of primary school age were considered to have a more positive experience than those in Secondary School. In addition to this, it was apparent that boys have a more positive experience when playing in North Ayrshire than girls, this was more apparent towards older aged children. It was also more apparent that boys have a much more positive view on the more informal play areas and green spaces. It is considered that when discussing plans for play spaces, that initiatives such as ['Make Space for Girls'](#) are part of the design process to bridge the gap
- **Auxiliary equipment and features are important** – Items such as benches (especially those which are suitable for those with disabilities), litter bins,

gates, lighting and footpaths are significant to how people experience these spaces.

- **Accessibility is a barrier to play.** This issue was particularly prevalent in the parents/carers feedback that question how safe the play areas are due to presence of traffic near some play parks. There was conflicting feedback, however.
- **Overall, the experience is a positive one, with recent improvements noted and welcomed but with still more to do.**
- **The importance of non-equipped play spaces was highlighted.** A significant portion of the positive feedback relating to the play experience was evident in the engagement. There is evident feelings self-ownership of these places for young people and they seem to be high valued places. Those picked up are listed below. Where possible, these will be mapped and recorded for future PSAs and used for discussions in plans and strategies. A number of these sites are already protected by virtue of being allocated Open Space.

## 5 Conclusion

Bringing together the four components of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (quality, quantity and accessibility assessments and consultation) has highlighted that in general, the experience of playing in North Ayrshire is a positive one. With quality of play space provision generally well spread throughout the Council area, with all settlements containing play spaces considered good or acceptable in terms of their quality. All settlements also have a good provision of open space that is considered acceptable or good that can provide opportunities for play.

Out of the 109 assessed, there were 10 play spaces considered to be underperforming, including sites in Arran, Garnock Valley, Irvine and North Coast.

There is a good distribution of equipped play spaces across North Ayrshire's localities relative to the size of the settlements. However, with regards to the number of play spaces per population Stevenston, West Kilbride, Saltcoats, Dalry and Ardrossan have fewer play spaces than other settlements. These settlements fell

short of the established standard of 1 play space per 1,000 population in which most settlements met. When considering North Ayrshire as a whole, there were 109 areas assessed for a population of 133,413. This means there is a play space for every 1,224 people, which is short of the standard, however it should be noted when considering the entire council area, those living in more rural areas typically have good access to green space and may not expect the level of provision within settlements.

There was also considered to be a good spread of accessible equipment throughout North Ayrshire. This is part was due to the recent investment of Play Parks from the Council's Streetscene department.

When considering the views gathered from the consultation, the overall feeling was that there was good provision for younger children (0-11 years old). However, while some of the provision was seen as good for older children, there was a lot that could be improved, particularly for girls aged 12-17. It was apparent that while availability of play space was an issue, behavioural problems such as attitudes towards young people young play spaces and antisocial behaviours from both adults and children was a large barrier to children accessing play. These views are somewhat backed up by the quantity analysis, with less spaces designed for older children. A full breakdown of play areas and suitability for different age groups is provided in this PSA.

## **Next steps**

The data contained with the PSA will be used to help form the policies and proposals of the next Local Development Plan. The data can help direct play related development to those settlements which don't quite reach the standard. Development may also be able to enhance provision and ensure that play opportunities are included early in the design process, including shaping requirements for sites allocated for development in the forthcoming Local Development Plan. The PSA will also be shared with the Council's Streetscene team who will use the feedback to help with their ongoing maintenance and play park renewal strategy.