



Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

Play Policy

2023-2028



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An aerial photograph of a large reservoir, likely a dam, with a concrete structure forming a rectangular basin. The water is a deep blue-green color. In the background, there is a dense urban area and rolling hills. A large, semi-transparent green circle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text.

Play for All

From the mountains to the sea,
it's there for you & me!

Foreword

The dlr Play Policy 2023-2028 provides an opportunity for us to establish a set of goals, objectives and actions to enhance play opportunities in the most accessible and inclusive way throughout dlr County.

There is a strong culture of play in dlr county. From the mountains to the sea, we are fortunate to have an attractive natural environment with an abundance of coastline, and green and wild spaces for natural play for our residents and visitors to the county. The impact of the pandemic highlighted this natural asset; it enhanced our quality of life and raised our appreciation of our local biodiversity. We appreciated afresh our urban spaces and wonderful flagship parks, where people of all ages could relax and enjoy dedicated play facilities.

The benefits of play are indisputable. Play stimulates the imagination, adding a sense of ‘magic’ to life and unleashing creativity. It is a lifelong skill and nurtures enduring friendships; many of the benefits of playing accompany people through the life course, i.e., social integration, physical and mental well-being, decision-making and problem solving.

In delivering play for all, we wish to ensure that every person in the county can access play and recreation freely and safely, experience adventure and test risk in a wide range of universally accessible settings. We aim to enhance the range of public play opportunities for those who are marginalised, disadvantaged or who have additional needs, such as physical, psychological, auditory or sensory challenges. We also want people to engage with nature spontaneously in stimulating spaces.

Adapting existing play areas to incorporate more intergenerational features, such as dedicated teenage spaces and additional seating and recreational facilities, will cater for everyone in our society. Sensory materials - sand, water, and plants - alongside interactive and playful sculptures that can be touched, sat on or climbed have the capacity to enable imaginative play. Encouraging an appreciation of local heritage and nurturing a sense of the richness of place in dlr through events, exhibitions, performances, and street art highlights an additional culturally rich layer of experience.

We are confident that our innovative and equitable, evidence-based approach to resource allocation for our play spaces and places will support us to deliver on our vision for the next 5 years: where play and recreation are an inclusive, life-enhancing daily experience for everybody in dlr county.



An Cathaoirleach
Denis O Callaghan



Príomhfheidhmeannach / Chief Executive
Frank Curran

01

Introduction: The Context



1.1 The Context

The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Play Policy provides a set of **goals, objectives** and **actions** to guide the delivery of realistic and achievable targets for enhancing play opportunities in the most inclusive way throughout Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County.

The policy is informed by the definition of play set out within **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC) and General Comment 17 on Article 31; which defines the child's right to play:



Children's play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise".



Other key reference points include The United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and the National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures' with its **five national outcomes**:



The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Play Policy draws on the Hub na nÓg-Participation Framework, the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown **Children and Young Persons Plan 2020-2023** and recent policy documents from the Department of Children, including Let's Play Ireland, the annual government-led campaign designed to remind everyone, young and old, of the fundamental importance of play.

Learnings from the impact of the pandemic have also influenced the provision of play and recreational facilities in the County, and how children and young people's needs should be met in this new context.

1.2 Our Play and Recreation assets

1.2.1 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council currently owns and maintains 33 playgrounds which are open to the public (the target age group is toddler to 12), around the County. There are 15 additional playgrounds which are scheduled to come under the remit of the Council over the next number of years as developments are completed and /or are taken in charge – the majority of these are already open to the public. There are also 14 outdoor exercise stations/Trim Trails/Callisthenics Areas within green spaces and parks.

In addition there are a large number of sports pitches which support a range of team sports including Gaelic games, soccer, rugby, American football, hockey, baseball, cricket, bowling, and boules. There are a growing number of all-weather pitches in the County. The Council maintains two 9-hole golf courses at Stepside and Marlay Park. There are three running tracks in the County (UCD, St Thomas's & Kilbogget Park) and a running path at Fernhill Park and Gardens.

The County has four leisure centres, three with swimming pools and two with skate parks.

There is an integrated network of sports facilities across the County which are guided by a [Sports Facilities Strategy \(2017-2022\)](#) the delivery of which is led by the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Sports Partnership. There is also a County Sports Participation Strategy (2018-2022), which addresses opportunities for sport and physical activity development and participation in the County.

1.2.2 The Parks and Landscape Service is responsible for over 350 open spaces which amounts to approximately 1000 hectares. The County has 7 flagship or regional parks located at Marlay Park, The People's Park, Blackrock Park, Fernhill Park and Gardens, Killiney Hill, Shanganagh Park and Cabinteely Park. Parks are used for community events, family gatherings, social walks and exercise.

1.2.3 There is a vibrant and dynamic cultural infrastructure in dlr, supported through the implementation of the [dlr Library Development Plan 2022-2026](#), the [Arts Development Plan 2016-2022](#) and the [dlr Cultural and Creativity Strategy 2023-27](#). dlr Arts Office in partnership with the other Dublin Local Authorities supports early childhood arts for children from 0-5 years across the region. Our artist in schools programme is one of the longest running school based programmes in the country, supporting primary school children, artists and teachers to work creatively together. Our Youth Creative Engagement Programme, centred in Ballyogan supports young people in the area to work on projects of interest to them and their peers, while linking with local services. We also support youth projects across the County with grant funding to develop youth arts projects.

Dlr Libraries is committed to facilitating reading, learning, and creative and cultural opportunities for all. Our eight branch libraries are a central hub and meeting place for our communities. We support children, young people and those who are young at heart! Beginning with our dlr Libraries Babies Love Books initiative, which gifts free board books to every child born in the County, progressing through an early years event programme and supporting the Little Library Book Bags for those starting school, we aim to make our libraries places of reading discovery and imagination.





Our spaces are welcoming and accessible to all, including wheelchair, visual and hearing impaired, and other users. Our event programme has evolved to include those who are neurodivergent and with additional needs. Each library has a sensory box for visitors to use and we have designated sensory spaces in some libraries with features such as sensory walls and garden furniture in other library spaces. Our programme of library events tries to be as inclusive as possible and to reflect the broad spectrum of library users.

Resources for parents and teachers include our accessible services collection (ASC) which is a lending T&T (Toys and Technology) collection for those with autism and additional needs. We also encourage a curiosity around STEAM subjects through our science-based lab programme and other event programming.

As part of the national Right to Read literacy campaign, which is book led and book based, we connect children and young people with authors and illustrators encouraging reading for pleasure and giving our young audiences the gift of choice in reading about inclusive and diverse worlds.

The Music Generation Music Education programme has been successfully established and it provides developmental skills across a variety of music genres for children and young people aged 0 -18 in dlr. The national Creative Ireland programme which promotes creativity in all its forms, is co-ordinated by dlr libraries. This includes Cruinniú na nÓg, the national day of creativity for children and young people – an annual celebration and unique in the world.

1 The young dependency ratio is the number of young people aged 0 -14 as a percentage of the population of working age.

2 DLR CYPSC - CYPP - 2020-2022

1.3 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown: Demographic Profile

According to Census 2016 findings of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council area, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown had a growing and diverse population. There was a higher than national average of people aged over 65, and a younger than average population when it came to people aged below 18. In the 18-24 age bracket, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown had a higher proportion than the national average. There were 37,478 family units with children in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown in 2016.

1.3.1 Preliminary data from the 2022 Census indicates that the population of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown was 233,457, up 15,439 from the 218,018 in 2016. Population growth in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown for the period 2016 to 2022 was 7.1% and this was broadly in line with that of the State at 7.6%.

1.3.2 According to preliminary findings from the 2022 Census, the location of population growth across the county between 2016 and 2022 was spatially uneven – with some areas growing significantly while other areas experiencing population decline. The Electoral Divisions which realised population growth included both new residential growth areas such as Ballyogan and environs and existing built-up areas such as Dundrum and Dún Laoghaire. Other Electoral Divisions experienced population decline including, for example, at Ballinteer, Ballybrack and Sandycove. (Census 2022 – Preliminary).

Preliminary 2022 CSO findings also state that Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown has experienced sustained population growth of c. 1.2% per annum through each of the last three intercensal periods (2006-2011, 2011-2016 and 2016-2022), comprising a c. 20% increase in total County population in the last 16 years.

1.3.3 The figure for children and young people aged 0-24 years is 69,851 which accounts for 32% of the population and this was broadly in line with national figures¹. The population can be broken down as follows:

- 0 to 4 years (13,810 or 6.3%)
- 5 to 12 years (21,302 or 9.8%)
- 13 to 17 years (12,682 or 5.8%)
- 18 to 24 years (22,056 or 10.1%)

1.3.4 While Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County is one of the most affluent in the country, several locations are below the national average or deemed disadvantaged. The Pobal Deprivation Index indicates that there are 33 Small Areas (SAs) within Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown which have been classified disadvantaged or very disadvantaged; the 2016 Census points out that this represents a decrease of 4 SAs since the 2011 Census. These SAs are dispersed throughout the County in Ballybrack, Sallynoggin, Shankhill, Dundrum, Cabinteely, Clonskeagh, Sandyford and Glencullen.

1.3.5 There are 37,478 family units with children in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (2016). Figures from the 2016 Census show a high percentage of young people aged 15-24 years living in the SAs, with 17% of the population aged between 15 – 24 years in contrast to 6% of the population of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. 15.4% of these families are lone parent families.

This demographic profile requires a keen focus on the needs of more marginalised children and how their needs may be most appropriately met in as inclusive a way as possible. It is notable that young dependency² in the County is projected to increase from c.28% in 2016 to 31% in 2033 but decrease thereafter to a young dependency ratio of c. 27% in 2031 and falling significantly further to c. 22% in 2040. (Table 1)

Table 1: Dependency Ratio for dlr in 2016, 2022, and projected to 2040

dlr	2016		2022		2027		2032		2040	
	No. of Persons	DR	No. of Persons	DR	No. of Persons	DR	No. of Persons	DR	No. of Persons	DR
Young Dependency (0-14 years)	40,039	27.9%	47,324	31.1%	45,998	29.1%	43,696	26.9%	36,651	21.9%
Older People Dependency (65+ years)	34,669	24.2%	41,123	27%	48,254	30.5%	54,193	33.3%	69,406	41.4%

Source: Calculated using data from the HNSA Data Repository - ESRI 50:50 City Scenario

1 DLR CYPSC - CYPP - 2020-2022 1

2 The young dependency ratio is the number of young people aged 0 -14 as a percentage of the population of working age

1.4 Why Play?

The UN Convention of Children’s rights has marked play as a universal right of children in supporting their development.



Play is an integrating mechanism. Play organises a child’s thinking, feelings, relationships and physical body, so that everything comes together to support development and learning.”

Play is at its most valuable when it happens spontaneously and is freely led by children themselves, with adult support when needed. Children who play in this way relish freedom and exercise choice and control over their actions. Adopting the Welsh principle of ‘play sufficiency’³ presents a holistic approach to supporting play in terms of the overall health and well-being of children and young people, by enabling them through active play to develop as active citizens capable of participating in their local areas and communities.

Barriers to Play

1.4.1 Consultation for the **Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Children and Young People’s Plan** highlighted the importance of accessible and inclusive play. However, despite the many benefits associated with play, children and young people often face barriers that restrict their ability to fulfil their natural drive and urge to play. Common barriers identified by respondents in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown include:

- The intersection of large roads, the presence of bridges and motorways.

- Increased levels of traffic within residential areas; this limits traditional street and community play opportunities due to safety concerns.
- A loss of accessible public green spaces which are openly available for children to play.
- A lack of understanding about the importance of play and a low level of tolerance towards children playing outdoors by some adults in some communities.
- A lack of appropriate play infrastructure e.g., fixed play areas, open recreation spaces, playable public realm etc. to meet the play needs of children and young people.
- Limited opportunities for the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities or complex needs within play spaces and environments.

1.5 Why Play is important⁴

The benefits of play support a child’s growth across four areas – social, emotional, cognitive and physical development⁵. Despite the benefits derived from play for both children and parents, time for free play has been markedly reduced for some children through socio-economic circumstances and lack of opportunity.

Changes in lifestyle and environment combined with ground-breaking technological advances have all impacted on how children spend their ‘free’ time. For some children, these changes have meant that they live more solitary lives and have less interaction with their peers. This deprives them, not only of the opportunity to play, but also of the critical physical, mental and social development that playing enables. This has been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic where children have been forced to remove themselves from social interaction with peers and received online schooling for long periods.

1.5.1 A physical and social environment that facilitates play increases the likelihood of improved outcomes for children and lessens the impact of factors that lead to poorer outcomes.

- Play promotes children’s development, learning, creativity and independence.
- Play keeps children healthy and active – habits which may carry on into adulthood.
- Play fosters social inclusion. It helps children to understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop a sense of community. It helps socially excluded children interact with others.
- Play helps reduce the involvement of children in anti-social behaviour.
- Play allows children find out about themselves, their abilities their interests.
- Play is therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment.

1.5.2 Findings from the consultation phase note that contributors felt that attention should be paid to facilities targeting children and young people with additional needs, and that their voices should be heard in the provision of play and recreational facilities. Findings also flagged that play is a lifelong skill; an important intergenerational tool facilitating enhanced communication between children and their parent/carers and between younger and older people in general. Many of the positive aspects gained from playing remain relevant for people right through their lives, i.e. social integration, physical & mental well-being, and problem solving.

³ Poverty of experience, opportunity and aspiration affects all children from all backgrounds

⁴ The New Charter for Children’s Play, Children’s Play Council, 1998

⁵ ISPC 2021

1.6 Methodology

The making of this Policy has evolved through a number of steps:



Research

Research of international best practice, analysis of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown demographic profile, review and audit of the opportunities already available for children and young people in the County with a focus on the need for universal accessibility, and future sustainable provision for citizens of all ages and abilities to play and enjoy the County's many amenities and facilities.



Consultation

An extensive process of consultation⁶, which has drawn from existing Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown strategies and plans, a previous consultation exercise in 2018, a public survey, meetings with young people and members of Comhairle na nÓg in the 6 electoral wards, a series of online engagements with key stakeholders and PPN members, several workshops with key staff groupings across Parks, the Sports Partnership, Social Inclusion, disability organisations and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Libraries and Arts Service.

The Approach

1.6.1 Working with the Parks team, a comprehensive audit of fixed play facilities in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and play value assessments was undertaken including:

- 1 An assessment of the play value associated with the fixed play areas within the County.
- 2 An assessment of the physical condition of existing fixed play areas within the County.
- 3 An analysis of the underlying demographic need for play areas, using geographical information system software (GIS), to determine existing fixed play area coverage levels, to identify gaps in provision and to identify redundant play areas.
- 4 Community consultation and engagement on the issue of play and play provision throughout the County through on-line surveys and focus groups.
- 5 Development of a set of minimum standards for design of play spaces across the public and private sector in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.
- 6 Development of key recommendations aimed at supporting the enhancement of play opportunities across the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Council area, leading to the formulation and writing of the Play policy aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan and other cross-cutting national and local policies. It has been developed with consideration for existing resources and those required in future service delivery.
- 7 Development of an implementation plan arising from the policy actions.

The Play policy is based on **three strategic priorities** from which cascade a series of future-focused goals and actions:



- SP1** - Delivering Play Spaces and Places
- SP2** - Enjoying Play and Recreation
- SP3** - Working Collaboratively

The implementation plan will be developed in response to these goals and actions. Progress on actions will be monitored and evaluated at regular intervals in line with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Corporate Plan objectives.

Indicators

1.6.2 Measures of success could include:

- The sufficiency of provision of high quality, accessible spaces and opportunities for play and recreation across the Local Authority area.
- The amount of time children and young people are outdoors playing and spending free time with friends.
- The level of satisfaction with the play spaces and opportunities available to children and young people whilst spending free time outdoors.
- The meaningful involvement of children and young people in the design and delivery of spaces and opportunities for outdoor play and recreation.
- Risk experience: children's views on the degree of excitement they experience AND Risk opportunities i.e., evidence of a risk-benefit approach being taken to allow challenging and exciting outdoor play opportunities
- Adult attitudes to children and young people being outside in the local environment
- The extent to which different agencies are working together in a cohesive way to promote outdoor play and create quality play experiences.

⁶ Section 4



02

Dún Laoighaire-
Rathdown
Play Policy
2023 - 2028



2.1 Our Strategic Priorities



Our Vision

Play and recreation will be an inclusive, life-enhancing daily experience for everybody in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County.



Our Mission

We will ensure that every person can access play and recreation opportunities freely and safely, offering variety, adventure and challenge in a wide range of universally accessible settings.



Strategic Priority 1

Delivering Play Spaces & Places

Strategic Priority 2

Enjoying Play and Recreation

Strategic Priority 3

Working Collaboratively



2.2 Our Principles

The concept of **universal design** underpins the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Play Policy.

- ✓ Everybody living in the County should experience play and have access to play opportunities.
- ✓ Children and young people have a right to play and to have a say in how they play.
- ✓ Play and playfulness are fundamental to good health, development and well-being.
- ✓ Play empowers core skills that support social, intellectual, physical and emotional well-being.
- ✓ Play helps people connect with their local communities and provides opportunities for fun and enjoyment.
- ✓ Everybody should have access to play places and spaces with high quality play opportunities, where they can enjoy outdoor free play and test risk in stimulating spaces, as well as experiencing nature on a daily basis.



2.3 Strategic Priority 1: Delivering Play Spaces and Places

2.3.1 A successful designed play space is a place, specifically designed for its location and providing as much play value⁷ as possible. Successful play spaces are 'bespoke'. They are designed to enhance their setting and are well located so that children can be close to nature. They provide a wide range of play experiences – where children can play in different ways and are accessible to children of all abilities. These kind of spaces enable children and young people of different ages to play together, they meet community needs and allow communities to develop and grow. They have built-in opportunities to experience risk, where children can stretch and challenge themselves in every way. They are appropriately maintained for play value and environmental sustainability and allow for change and evolution – evolving as children and other users grow⁸.

2.3.2 Public parks, green and urban spaces should provide play opportunities that are not dependent on the presence of playgrounds and play equipment - these are natural play areas where natural elements form play pieces. In our conversations with them, young people have flagged the importance of biodiversity, and the opportunities and benefits that natural play, open spaces and being close to nature offer them. Apart from public parks with dedicated play spaces, they cited opportunities offered by the coastline around Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown with its beaches, the mountains surrounding the county, wild spaces, and the potential that derelict sites offer to be re-imagined.

2.3.3 They also mentioned the right of children to play close to home and the need to have safe conditions, where children feel comfortable to play, e.g., reducing and discouraging traffic by enforcing speed limits so that children can play on streets near where they live, or working to alleviate the impact of anti-social behaviour through using street art to create features supporting safe outdoor play. Local green spaces within estates or within the local community can all be viewed as natural play spaces where children can play together in their own community.



Strategic Priority 1: Future Focus

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council will deliver welcoming, safe and adventurous, inclusive play places in attractive and accessible locations across the County.

Key Actions

- S1.1 Assess the requirement for play provision in response to the demographic profile and various catchment areas in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.
- S1.2 Deliver targeted capital investment in play development at locations identified in order of greatest need.
- S1.3 Design, maintain, upgrade and renew fixed play spaces.
- S1.4 Ensure that each local area provides age-appropriate and accessible play facilities for all age ranges and abilities; 0-5, 6-11, and 12-18 years.
- S1.5 Support communities to develop sustainable solutions to meeting local play need.
- S1.6 Involve children and young people in the re-imagining of spaces for play, and in the design of new play spaces.

⁷ The value an environment, space, object or piece of equipment brings to children's experience of play.

⁸ Shackell and others; Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces (2008)



2.4 Strategic Priority 2: Enjoying Play and Recreation



Play happens whenever and wherever there is an opportunity to play. The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity. These factors contribute to the enjoyment of playing and the incentive to continue playing”⁹

2.4.1 Play stimulates the imagination, adding a sense of ‘magic’ to life; it unleashes creativity; it nurtures life-long friendships. It is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and young people. It enables them have fun, enjoy each other’s company, expand their language skills, their fine and gross motor skills, their social skills as well as their problem-solving abilities. Play also offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children.

2.4.2 Many of the young people we consulted with, referenced the importance of being close to nature and how it made them feel more positive about themselves. This is borne out by hundreds of academic studies showing that experiencing biodiversity positively influences physical and mental health and well-being. Research on childhood exposure to nature suggests that early positive experiences and connectedness to nature may contribute to higher achievement in school, better physical fitness and lower rates of obesity, as well as reduced stress and greater self-confidence, particularly for those who are most in need of mental health and well-being support. This research also notes that “Nature appears to provide a calmer, quieter, safer context for learning; a warmer, more cooperative context for learning; and a

combination of “loose parts” and autonomy that fosters developmentally beneficial forms of play”.¹⁰

2.4.3 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County accounts for higher than the national average of people over the age of 65 years. Current intergenerational play/recreation provision includes boules courts, outdoor gym equipment, calisthenics, outdoor chess tables, putting green, outdoor table tennis tables and music spaces equipped with percussion instruments. Adapting existing play spaces to incorporate even more intergenerational elements and features will develop further robust, universal spaces; spaces catering for everyone in the family. This also helps build relationships between the different generations within the community. Sensory materials - sand, water, and plants alongside interactive and playful sculptures that can be touched, sat on, climbed have the capacity to enable imaginative play. This will encourage more family visits to these playful, yet universal spaces, while also extending the ‘dwell’ time. Encouraging an appreciation of local heritage and nurturing a sense of the richness of place in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown through events, exhibitions, performances, and street art can cast another culturally rich layer over other physical interventions.



9 General Comment 17, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

10 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6401598/>



Strategic Priority 2: Future Focus

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council will enable people of all ages to play freely and safely while learning to manage risks and make choices about where, how and when they play, according to their age, stage, ability and preference.

Key Actions

- S2.1 **Physical:** Increase children's opportunities to play in outdoor places including green space, parks, and streets, where they can engage in physical activities such as running, jumping and climbing.
- S2.3 **Creative and imaginative play:** Provide opportunities for creative activities such as constructing or making things, painting, using water, sand and engaging children and young people in imaginative play such as making up games, dressing up etc..
- S2.6 **Natural Play:** Provide unstructured play opportunities in their natural environment for children and young people to improve their well-being and enhance their awareness of local biodiversity.
- S2.2 **Social:** Recognise the need of older children (especially girls) to 'hang out' by providing well-designed teen shelters, spaces and quiet places, and to give them an opportunity to interact with other children of different ages and abilities.
- S2.4 **Inclusive play:** Maximise the range of public play opportunities available to those who are marginalised, disadvantaged or who have additional needs, such as physical, psychological, auditory or sensory challenges.
- S2.7 **Sport and Play:** Promote healthy lifestyles, well-being and maximum participation through informal sports activity and alternative activity-based skills.
- S2.5 **Smart Play:** Utilise technology to enhance interaction with play opportunities across the public realm, local spaces, heritage sites and other facilities.
- S2.8 **Intergenerational Play Opportunities:** Provide fixed & natural elements to facilitate intergenerational play within existing & new play spaces.



2.5 Strategic Priority 3: Working Collaboratively

- 2.5.1 Everybody deserves the opportunity to engage in safe and healthy play. We are excited about collaborating with colleagues in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, and partners in other sectors, to leverage the positive benefits that investing in safe and healthy play can have for our communities. We have a vibrant Children and Young People’s Plan and a dynamic Age-Friendly Strategy. We can work with each of our partners to build awareness around the life changing benefits that play has throughout our lives. Working together will help address those barriers that restrict play opportunities while ensuring that available resources are invested in a way that best meets play need.
- 2.5.2 Providing opportunities to meet the play and recreation needs of older children and young people provides an ongoing challenge for partners across the statutory and community sectors and for society as a whole. It is recognised that as children grow older, outdoor recreation opportunities are less available for certain groups, particularly for girls or for those less interested in sports.
- 2.5.3 Targeted cross-sector engagement to establish a cohesive and strategic approach to delivering on these needs will be essential. It will require input from a range of agencies including An Garda Síochána (through Community Garda work and diversionary programmes); youth services (delivering youthwork initiatives/opportunities within the area); the community and voluntary sector (leveraging existing services, opportunities and accessible locations) and the education sector (making better use of school grounds etc..) Given the need for a partnership approach, a formal Play Partnership has the potential to collaborate to initiate meaningful interventions.
- 2.5.4 The Children and Young People’s Plan consultation noted that young people find it difficult to access information about services and activities provided for them. Consultation for the Play Policy corroborated this view. It was proposed that mapping facilities that are available and making the information accessible to young people in ways that engage them should be considered. Developing an online directory of services/facilities, similar to the multi-agency Age-Friendly Directory for older people also arose in consultation with agencies, who felt that creating more connectivity with young people and wider communities, especially for those new to the County, would be helpful.

Strategic Priority 3: Future Focus

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Co. Co. will leverage the benefits of a partnership approach to support the delivery of play and recreation opportunities across the county.

Key Actions

- S3.1 Identify the convergence between the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Arts, Sports, Healthy Ireland, Heritage, Library and Play Policies to strengthen play and recreation opportunities.
- S3.2 Consider the appointment of a Play Officer.
- S3.3 Build cross departmental internal teams to maximise play and recreation opportunities across the public realm, and to enable universal access.
- S3.4 Through the Local Community Development Committee, engage with external agencies to coordinate a multi-agency play-led approach to planning and developing play and recreation opportunities and establish a formal Play Partnership.
- S3.5 Liaise with other stakeholders to establish effective communications channels to stimulate child-led opportunities for play in local neighbourhoods.
- S3.6 Continue to engage with children and young people on the basis that play is instinctive, intrinsic and vital to their general health and well-being.



03

Implementing the Policy



3.1 Play Provision across the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Area

3.1.1 The provision of enclosed fixed play areas has been the main thrust of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown’s play provision over the lifetime of the Council’s existence, but this is now being complemented and enhanced by more natural play elements and a more open and inviting play provision. Where possible new play provision will use as much of the natural character of the location as possible. Natural elements such as large fallen trees, tree stumps, boulders, mounded earth, water and other naturally occurring elements together with fixed play pieces will be utilised to form high quality play spaces. Where appropriate, greater space will be allocated to natural play with limited barriers and boundary fences. This will facilitate more inclusive play spaces with more natural incorporation into the wider landscape. Greater inclusivity will be at the core of all play provision. There will be opportunities for bespoke natural play spaces also where little no fixed play elements will be used.

Several existing play spaces, due to their age and condition are in need of a complete or partial redesign which will incorporate a mix of fixed and natural play elements to fulfil the needs of the population they serve.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of most of the fixed play areas in the County, except for some play areas located in private developments, which will most likely be taken in charge by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown at a future date. Over time, the needs of communities change. As the resident population of an area ages, the needs of fixed play areas may also adapt to cater for growing families, growing children and be flexibly designed to meet intergenerational needs.

The Play Environment in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Quality assessment

3.1.2 In preparing the plan, an assessment and evaluation of the different types of fixed play facilities, play spaces and green places in the County has been carried out. It incorporates:

- 1 Assessments of the population demographics that dictate demand for play facilities for various age categories within each of the six ward areas,
- 2 The overall condition of each existing play facility, and,
- 3 The current play value of each existing fixed play area.

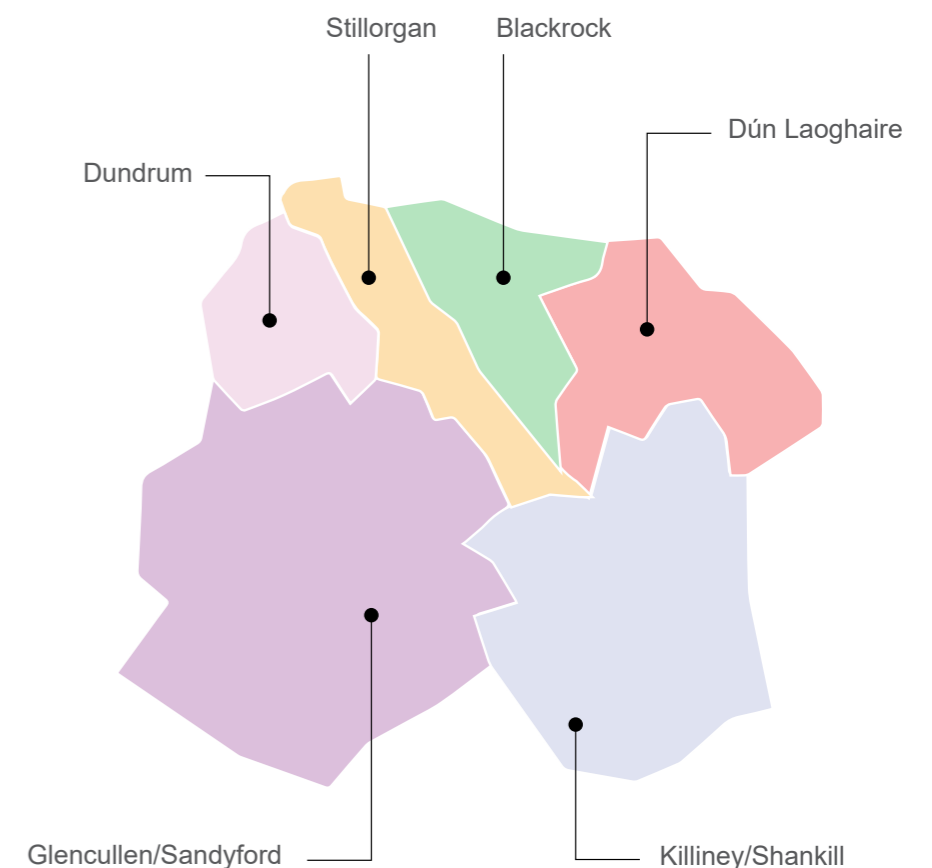
The assessment outlines the demand for play for each age category within every catchment area. It allows a determination to be made regarding existing facilities, and helps in decision making regarding upgrading and enhancement, in order of priority.

It also allows a determination to be made regarding the development of future facilities, in areas of greatest need and priority, ensuring therefore that there is equitable access to suitable play facilities for all residents across the County. A ranking system has been created for the prioritisation of new developments.

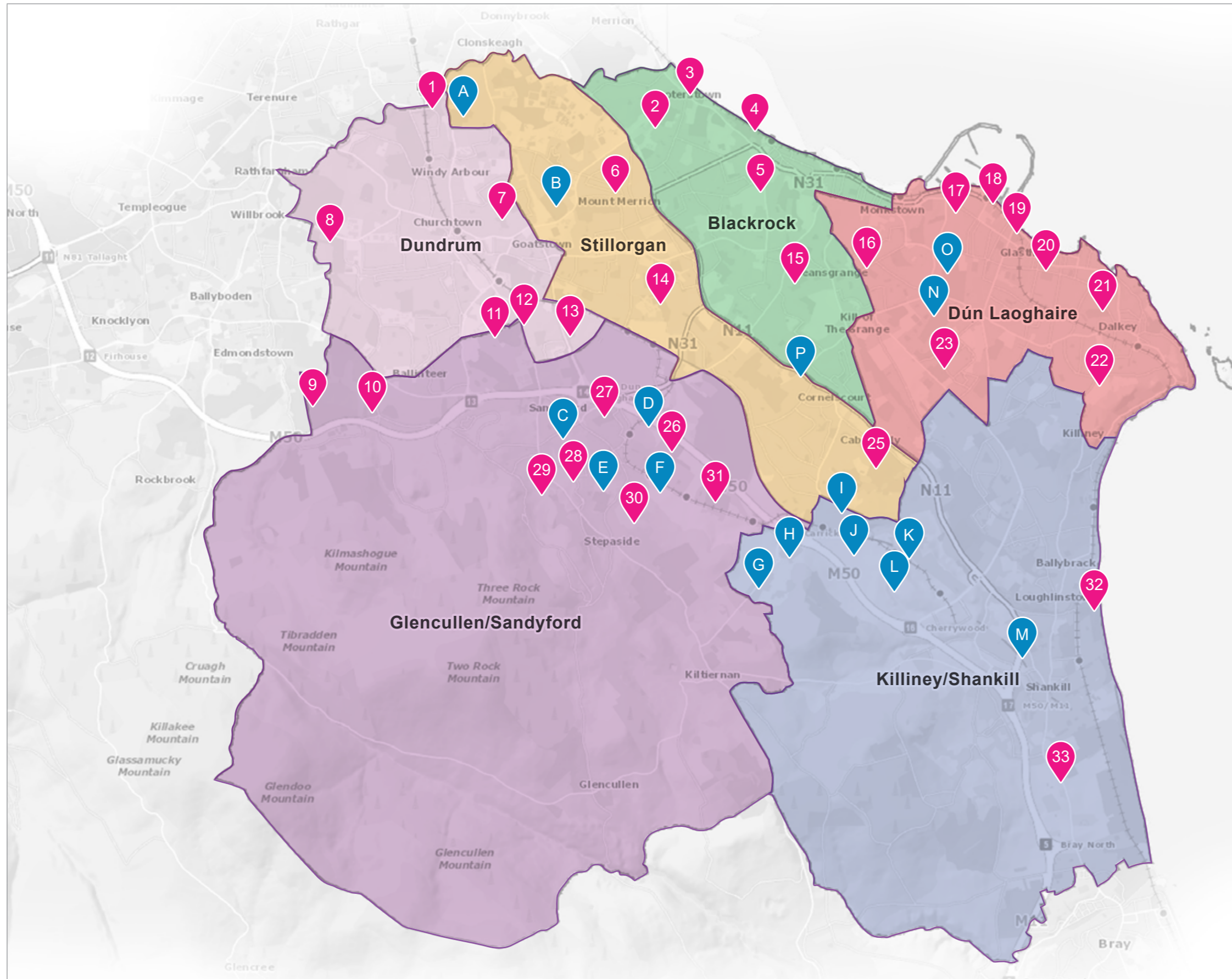
Rural and Urban distribution

3.1.3 The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Council area is made up a combination of urban and rural areas with the resident population located across a range of residential classifications including rural settlement-based, dispersed rural living and urban residential.

The majority of the existing fixed play facilities lie within the urban areas due to the high population densities in these wards, while the more rural parts of the County, such as Glencullen/Sandyford are better suited to the enhancement or development of existing green space facilities, due to the low population densities in these areas.



MAP 3.1 Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Municipal Districts (Wards)



EXISTING FIXED PLAYSACES

- 1 Patrick Doyle Road
- 2 McCabe Villas
- 3 Blackrock Pk. (Boosterstown)
- 4 Blackrock Park
- 5 Carysfort Park
- 6 Deer Park
- 7 Taney Green
- 8 Loreto Park
- 9 Marlay Park
- 10 Marlay Park (Toddler)
- 11 Ballawley Park
- 12 Ballawley Pk.(Sandyford)
- 13 Blackthorn Park
- 14 Clonmore Park
- 15 Springhill-Newtownpark
- 16 Soldiers & Sailors
- 17 Library Road
- 18 The Metals
- 19 People's Park
- 20 Hudson Park
- 21 Hyde Park
- 22 Killiney Hill Park
- 23 Pearse Park
- 24 Kilbogget Park
- 25 Cabinteely Park
- 26 The Gallops
- 27 Leopardstown Heights
- 28 Bellarmine
- 29 Fernhill House & Gardens
- 30 Stepside
- 31 Samuel Beckett
- 32 Shanganagh Cliffs
- 33 Shanganagh Park

TIC FIXED PLAY SPACES

- A Hawthorn Ave.
- B Knockrabo
- C Belmont Aikens
- D Glencairn
- E Blue Playground/Bellarmine Woods
- F Clayfarm Playground
- G Inglenook Wood
- H Blackberry Hill
- I Priorsland
- J Beckett Park
- K Parade Green
- L Tully Park
- M Woodbank
- N Honey Park
- O Cualanor
- P Westminster Wood

MAP 3.2 Fixed Playspace Distribution

3.2 Assessment of Existing Fixed Play Provision

Existing Playground provision

3.2.1 Existing playground provision has been assessed through the application of three separate criteria:

- 1 Demographics Assessment
- 2 Conditions Assessment
- 3 Play Value Assessment

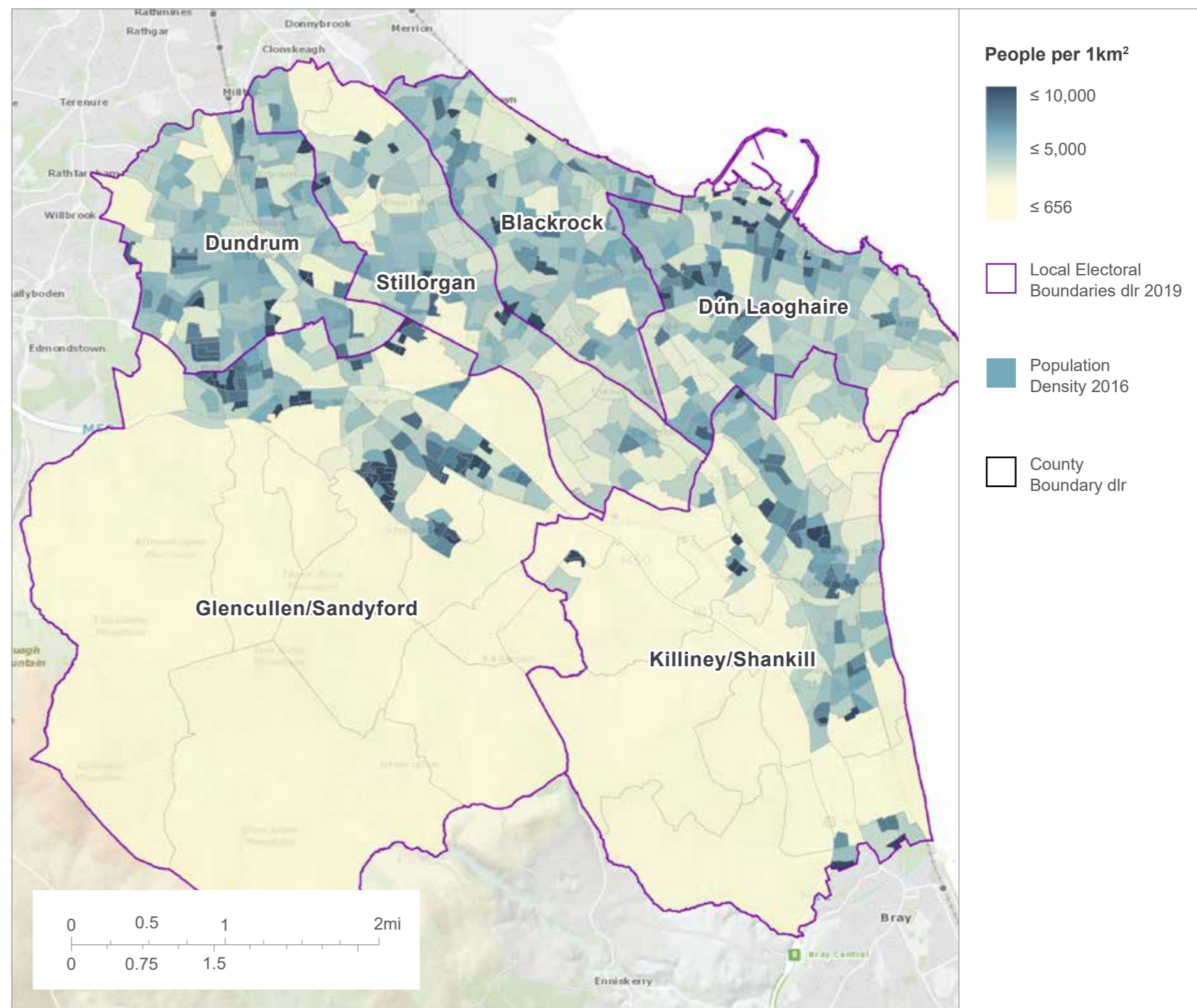
Demographics Assessment

3.2.2 This criterion assesses the percentage of population aged between 0-5 years, 6-11 years, and 12-18 years, where the overall population density is greater than 5000 people per 1km². The data utilised for this assessment has been extracted from Census 2016 statistics. The 5000 people per 1km² has been identified as a threshold to target more densely populated areas with a greater demand.

The new playground catchment area is based on a 1km radius around each playground, making it more accessible for accompanied children in the 0-5 year, and 6-11 year age brackets. This was previously 1.2km but has been reduced as part of this Policy to increase accessibility.

In the 12-18 year bracket, a catchment area of 3km is considered by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown to be a reasonable distance to expect that a teenager could travel to access suitable age range play and recreation facilities.

The level of population within the different age ranges outlines the demand for play by each age category within each catchment area. This allows a determination to be made regarding existing facilities and the need to upgrade, expand, or enhance them to meet local demographic needs.



MAP 3.3 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Population Density - 2016 Census

Ordnance Survey Ireland | dlr | Geodirectory, OSI

Condition Assessment

3.2.3 The Condition Assessment Criteria is based on the annual RPII¹¹ playground inspection report, which primarily focuses on safety and maintenance of equipment and ancillary items (site furniture, boundary railings, signage etc..), and surfacing.

A visual assessment to determine the aesthetic value and appropriateness of all fixed play provision was undertaken in addition to the assessment of the RPII inspection reports.

For the purposes of the Condition Assessment, each playground has been assessed on the following criteria:

- i Condition of play equipment & ancillary items
- ii Condition of surfacing
- iii Visual assessment of condition

Play Value Assessment

3.2.4 The Play Value Assessment is based on the Play Scotland Quality of Play Environment Toolkit. This is an assessment checklist which has been designed to evaluate the play value of existing play facilities. The checklist is sub-divided into the following categories:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Location | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Factors |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessibility | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Challenge & Risk |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Features | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Play Opportunities |

The appraisal collates a score for all three age ranges; it provides not only a play value for the play facility, but also illustrates the value that the play facility offers each age category using the facility.

Play opportunities are generally categorised as follows:

Physical play opportunities

Presence of physical play opportunities afforded by the play area, and the range of play equipment available.

Creative play opportunities

Presence of sand, soil or mud play, water play opportunities, presence of loose play parts, opportunities for 'pretend' play, such as natural spaces and places that stimulate the imagination, utilising materials which can be manipulated.

Social play opportunities

Presence of quiet spaces to sit/chat/think, places to hide, opportunities to interact with children of different ages and abilities, focused recognition of the social aspect of play for older children e.g., teen shelter.

Inclusive play opportunities

Presence, scope and scale of inclusive and accessible play opportunities for children with disabilities or those with additional needs.

Measurement of the different play opportunities available to the different age ranges (0-5 years, 6-11 years and 12-18 years) within each fixed play area helps Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown in planning and prioritising the delivery of increased play and physical activity for children and young people in the County.

It ensures that sufficient play opportunities are provided in terms of quantity and quality to children and young people within the area. The assessment outlines the demand for play for each age category within every catchment area. It allows a determination to be made regarding existing facilities and the need to upgrade, expand, or enhance, in order of priority.

Outcome

3.2.5 Existing fixed play areas vary in terms of the type and range of play equipment available. This is often due to underlying locational factors. These factors can include the size of the site, the underpinning geography of the location, and the number of households for whom the play area has been designed.

The demographic analysis, the conditions ranking, and the play value rankings of existing facilities enable Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown to target capital investment in order of priority and in areas of most need.

This assessment process also allows Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown to have a means of measuring progress in terms of the overall quality of play value across the area for the duration of the Policy.

The assessments lead to a series of recommendations which address gaps in fixed play provision in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, and which aim to enhance levels of play value in existing fixed play areas.

In the case of smaller play areas, the equipment may be limited, with some larger play areas offering a good deal more, often alongside wider green space and recreational activities. The objective is to ensure that the collective play offering provides variety, challenge and enjoyment and can be further enhanced by natural play.

11 RPII: Royal Playground Inspections Institute



3.3 New Play Space Provision

A common design approach

3.3.1 It is important that play areas developed by non-council providers adhere to a set of agreed minimum design standards. The Play Policy establishes a set of core quality design principles, which when applied across all fixed play provision, will enhance play value and ensure consistency of delivery across the region, whether it is Council-designed, taken in charge or privately managed.

A mapping exercise will quickly identify:

- Areas that do not fall within the aspirational 1km radius, and which can therefore be considered as potential locations for new play facilities subject to the new playground priority development criteria.
- The 3km catchment distance suitable for older unaccompanied children.

3.3.2 All new playgrounds will be built in catchment areas that are located outside a 1km radius of an existing playground, and which have sufficient population densities of 5,000 residents, under the age of 18, per kilometre squared. Site assessments will determine whether site conditions are appropriate for new developments, which shall be designed to provide high levels of play value to all age ranges within the designated catchment area.

3.3.3 Requirements for new playground provision have been assessed using the following criteria:

- 1 Demographics
- 2 Playground spatial distribution
- 3 Site conditions

Assessment of the areas that fall outside of the 1km radius catchment area with the highest population density for each age category and with appropriate site conditions will form part of the implementation plan.

A

Play Provision

0 – 5 years, 6 – 11 years

New play space provision for 0-5 years and 6-11 years will be determined by locations that fall outside the existing 1km catchment areas. The focus will be placed upon the percentage of population aged 0-5 years and 6-11 years, where population density is greater than 5000 per km squared.

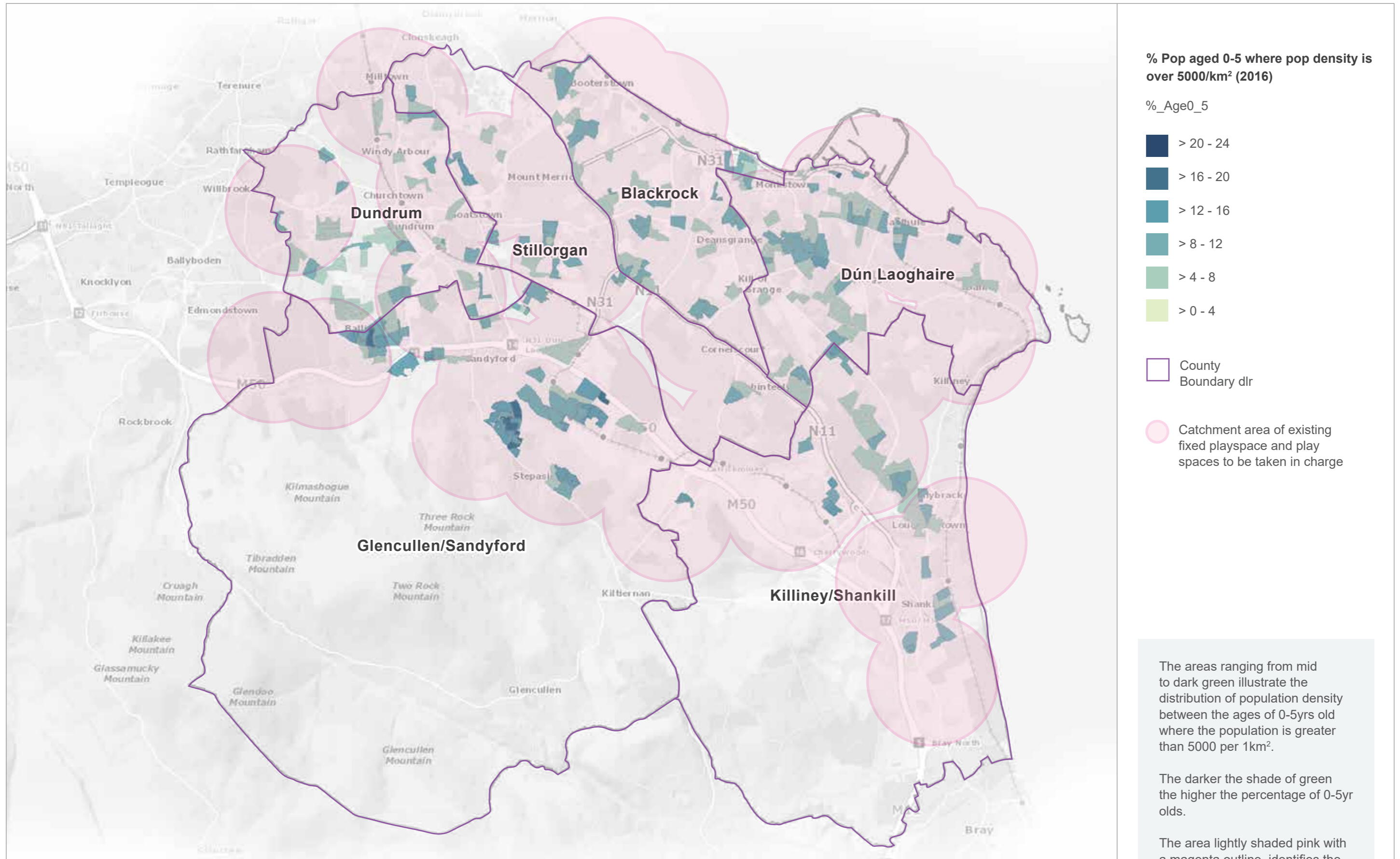
MAP 3.4 illustrates the higher concentrations of children aged between 0-5 years old relative to the distribution of existing play facilities. The map has been filtered to focus on areas with a population greater than 5,000 per 1km sq to get a more accurate picture of 0-5 population density.

The areas with a low population density have been removed to create further clarity about where the high concentrations of children aged 0 – 5 years are located.

For example, areas with a particularly low population density located within the Glencullen-Sandyford were showing a high percentage of children aged 0 – 5 years, when in fact, the low population density meant that although the % was high, the numbers of children aged 0 – 5 years old was low, relative to the rest of the County.

Within the catchment area, regional parks such as Fernhill, Cabinteely, Marlay and Shankill Parks are within a three km radius, where accompanied children 0-5 years and 6-11 years will be accommodated.





The areas ranging from mid to dark green illustrate the distribution of population density between the ages of 0-5yrs old where the population is greater than 5000 per 1km².

The darker the shade of green the higher the percentage of 0-5yr olds.

The area lightly shaded pink with a magenta outline, identifies the existing 1km catchment coverage.

MAP 3.4 - Percentage of population age 0-5 years where the population is greater than 5000/km²

Map shows a 1km catchment area for existing and tic fixed playspaces

B

Teenage Provision

12-18 years

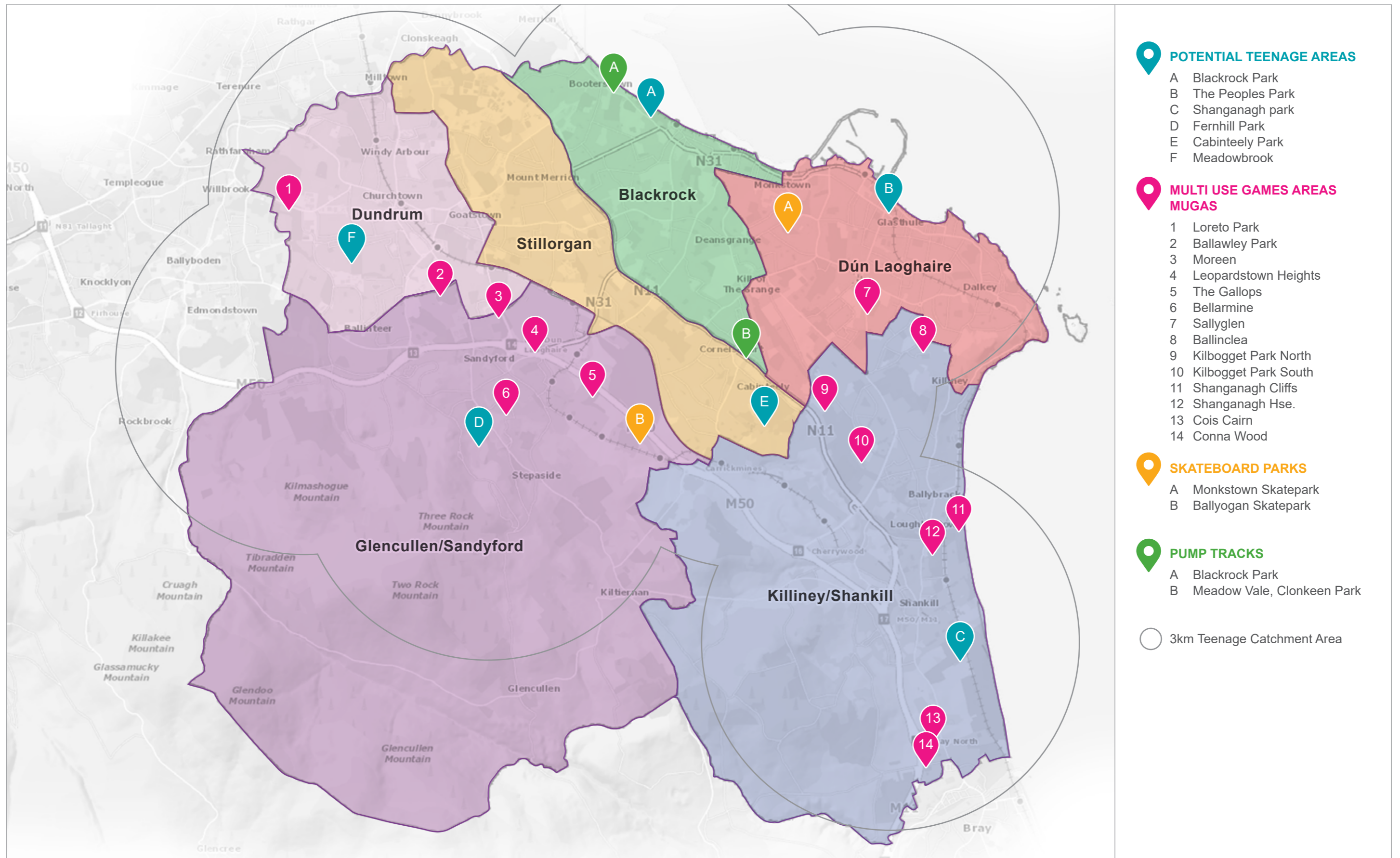
Map 3.5 focuses on locating teenage spaces within an accessible 3km radius of home. Six potential teenage areas have been identified based on Regional Park / Town Centre locations within this 3km radius as follows:

1. Blackrock Park
2. Dún Laoghaire Town Centre/ The People's Park
3. Shanganagh Park
4. Fernhill Park
5. Cabinteely Park
6. Dundrum Town Centre / Meadowbrook

These six locations serve the county-wide requirements based on the average population distribution.

Existing MUGAs and Skateboard Parks have been plotted onto this map, illustrating that a certain quantity of teenage-based provision is already located within each of the identified 3km catchment areas. This helps to identify suitable sites for additional teenage facility provision.





POTENTIAL TEENAGE AREAS

- A Blackrock Park
- B The Peoples Park
- C Shanganagh park
- D Fernhill Park
- E Cabinteely Park
- F Meadowbrook

MULTI USE GAMES AREAS MUGAS

- 1 Loreto Park
- 2 Ballawley Park
- 3 Moreen
- 4 Leopardstown Heights
- 5 The Gallops
- 6 Bellarmine
- 7 Sallyglen
- 8 Ballinlea
- 9 Kilbogget Park North
- 10 Kilbogget Park South
- 11 Shanganagh Cliffs
- 12 Shanganagh Hse.
- 13 Cois Cairn
- 14 Conna Wood

SKATEBOARD PARKS

- A Monkstown Skatepark
- B Ballyogan Skatepark

PUMP TRACKS

- A Blackrock Park
- B Meadow Vale, Clonkeen Park

○ 3km Teenage Catchment Area

MAP 3.5 3km Teenage Space catchment area with teenage provision overlaid

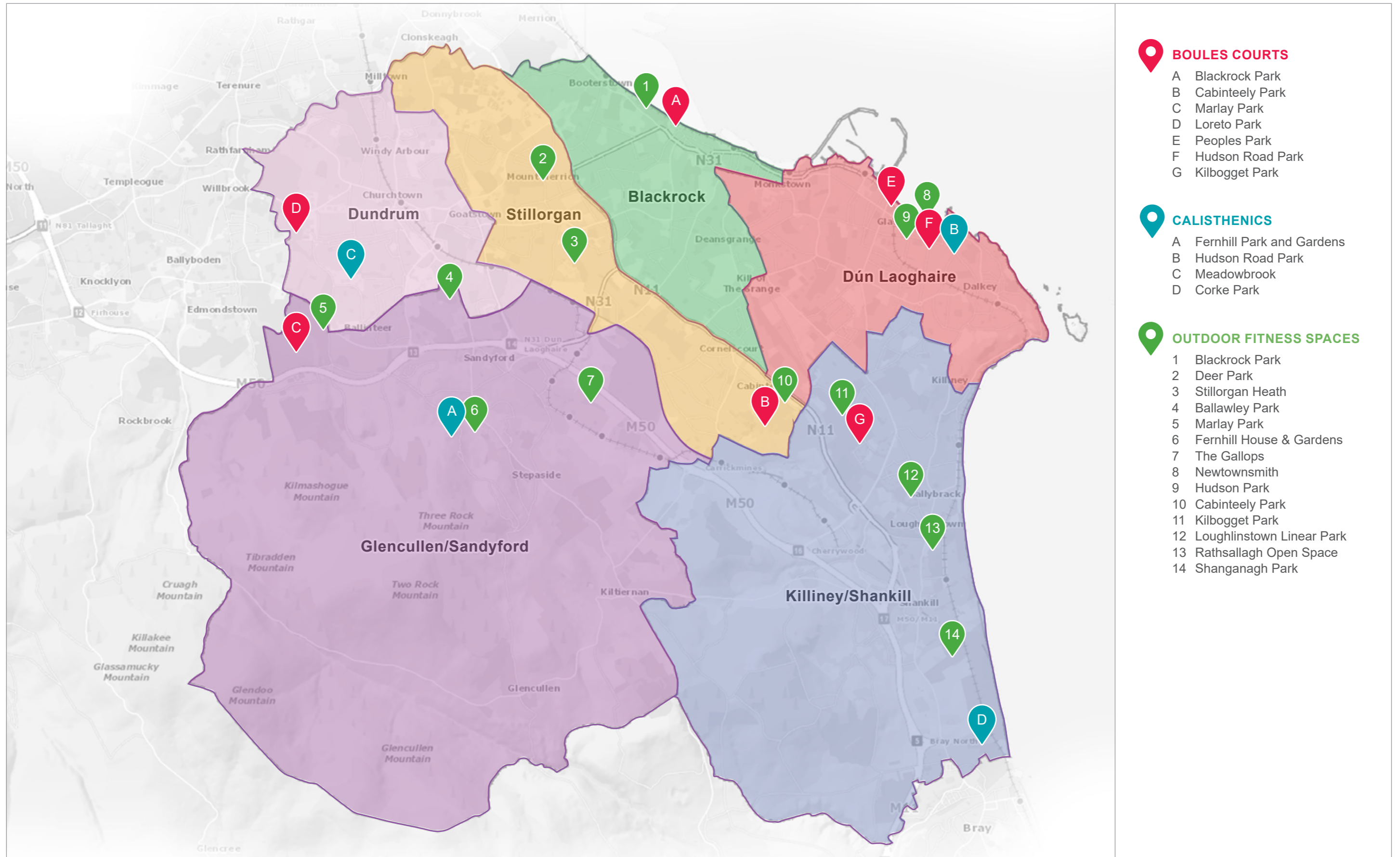


Intergenerational Play/ Recreation Provision

0 - 100 years +

Map 3.6 identifies the spatial distribution of existing intergenerational play opportunities throughout the County. Based on the Regional Park 3km catchment area, the majority of the teenage-adult population has been catered for. Current intergenerational play/recreation provision includes outdoor fitness areas, boules courts, calisthenics, outdoor chess tables, outdoor table tennis tables and music spaces. Seating and picnic tables encourage social engagement and address issues of isolation among older people.





MAP 3.6 Spatial Distribution of Intergenerational Playspaces

3.4 Areas for Consideration for Natural Play

Green and open spaces

In line with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown's aspiration to promote natural play, there is also an opportunity to identify areas outside of the 1km radius catchment area with a high density of children and consider these as potential Natural Play Zones. These existing green spaces will be enhanced to incorporate natural elements, i.e., earth mounding, additional tree planting for climbing opportunities, boulders & logs strategically positioned, dry riverbeds, water courses etc..., thereby providing a more playful natural environment.

3.4.1 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Co. Co. also has many non-fixed play areas, which incorporate the wider use of green and open spaces within community settings for the purpose of play. Non-fixed play allows children to play in a way that meets their developmental needs without formal direction from adults. Through non-fixed play, children can use the wider environment in order to create their own play experience. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Co. Co. is committed to exploring and moving towards the implementation of non-fixed play approaches at community level.

3.4.2 While green and open spaces are not addressed specifically through the play-value assessment or the conditions assessment, it is proposed that a number of initiatives will be rolled out to enhance the use of these spaces, through collaborative work with other Council departments. For example, the placement of street furniture and seating can enhance appropriate use of these spaces, thereby further increasing the play value of the area.

Facilities to be taken in charge (tic)

3.4.3 There are a number of playgrounds that Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Co anticipates will be tic over the coming months and years. Without the playground condition assessment criteria, which cannot be acquired until the playgrounds have been tic by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown management, a full assessment of these play facilities cannot be implemented. As such, carrying out a conditions assessment is currently redundant. However, it should be noted that the Council ensures the highest quality in design and location of these facilities through the County Development Plan.

It is important to acknowledge that these facilities will, in all likelihood, be incorporated into the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown schedule of play provision at some point in the future; their spatial distribution is being mapped and incorporated as part of the criteria for selecting future play facility locations. Consequently, when evaluating where new play facilities should/should not be located, the play facilities to be tic will also help inform those decisions.





Artist impression of Teenage space at Blackrock Park

3.5 Implementation Grid

The Implementation Grid illustrates both the existing fixed play facilities that have been identified for upgrade works and the areas that have been identified for new play spaces, based on the selection criteria outlined earlier in this section.

The existing fixed play spaces have been listed in order of priority, based on their condition and play value assessment scores.

Proposed new play spaces have been selected using the criteria of demographics, existing playground spatial distribution, and site conditions. A programme will be brought to the Dun Laoghaire and Dundrum Area Committees quarterly that will describe plans on upgrading and delivery of playspaces in the County.

1. Existing Fixed Playground Priority based on Condition and Play Value Assessment Scores

Ward	Location	Designation	Type	Play Space Score
Glencullen/Sandyford	The Gallops	Local Park	Playground	3.5
Glencullen/Sandyford	Marlay Toddler Play Area	Regional Park	Playground	3.5
Blackrock	Blackrock Park	Regional Park	Playground	4
Dun Laoghaire	Hyde Park	Local Park	Playground	4
Blackrock	Springhill Park	Local Park	Playground	4.5
Dún Laoghaire	Soldiers and Sailors	Local Park	Playground	4.5
Glencullen/Sandyford	Belarmine	Local Park	Playground	4.5
Blackrock	Carysfort Park	District Park	Playground	5
Dún Laoghaire	Pearse Park	District Park	Playground	5
Glencullen/Sandyford	Leopardstown Heights	Amenity Open Space	Playground	5
Stillorgan	Clonmore Park	District Park	Playground	5
Dún Laoghaire	Killiney Hill Park	Regional Park	Playground	5.5
Dundrum	Patrick Doyle Park	Amenity Open Space	Playground	5.5
Killiney/Shankill	Kilbogget Park	District Park	Playground	5.5
Blackrock	Blackrock Park Booterstown	Regional Park	Playground	6
Dún Laoghaire	The People's Park	Regional Park	Playground	6
Glencullen/Sandyford	Samuel Beckett Playground	Civic Space	Playground	6
Stillorgan	Deerpark	District Park	Playground	6
Dún Laoghaire	The Metals	Civic Space	Playground	6.5
Dún Laoghaire	Library Road	Civic Space	Playground	6.5
Glencullen/Sandyford	Ballawley playlot (Wesley)	Local Park	Playground	6.5
Blackrock	McCabe Villas	Amenity Open Space	Playground	7
Glencullen/Sandyford	Stepaside	Amenity Open Space	Playground	7
Glencullen/Sandyford	Ballawley Main (Sandyford Rd.)	Local Park	Playground	7
Killiney/Shankill	Shangannagh Park	Regional Park	Playground	7
Killiney/Shankill	Shangannagh Cliffs	Amenity Open Space	Playground	7
Dundrum	Blackthorn Park	Local Park	Playground	7.5
Dundrum	Loreto Park	District Park	Playground	7.5
Dundrum	Taney Green	Local Park	Playground	7.5
Glencullen/Sandyford	Fernhill	Regional Park	Playground	7.5
Dún Laoghaire	Hudson Park	Local Park	Playground	8
Glencullen/Sandyford	Marlay Regional Play Area	Regional Park	Playground	8
Stillorgan	Cabinteely Park	Regional Park	Playground	8

2. Proposed New Play Spaces - Based on Selection Criteria

Ward	Location	Type	Future Playspace
Blackrock	Longford Terrace	Amenity Green Space	X
Dún Laoghaire	Clonkeen Park	Local Park	X
Dún Laoghaire	Myrtle Square	Civic Space	X
Dundrum	Finsbury Park	Local Park	X
Dundrum	Meadowbrook/Ludford Park	District Park	X
Glencullen/Sandyford	Simonsridge/Kilcross	Local Park	X
Killiney/Shankill	Corke Abbey Park	Amenity Green Space	X
Killiney/Shankill	Loughlinstown Linear Park	Local park	X

3) Fixed Play Spaces to be Taken In Charge by Dlr

Ward	Location	Map
Stillorgan	Hawthorn Ave.	A
Stillorgan	Knockrabo	B
Glencullen/Sandyford	Belmont Aikens	C
Glencullen/Sandyford	Glencairn	D
Glencullen/Sandyford	Blue Playground/Bellermine Woods	E
Glencullen/Sandyford	Clayfarm Playground	F
Killiney/Shankill	Inglenook Wood	G
Killiney/Shankill	Blackberry Hill	H
Killiney/Shankill	Priorsland	I
Killiney/Shankill	Beckett Park	J
Killiney/Shankill	Parade Green	K
Killiney/Shankill	Tully Park	L
Killiney/Shankill	Woodbank	M
Dún Laoghaire	Honey Park	N
Dún Laoghaire	Cualanor	O
Stillorgan	Westminister Wood	P

4) Teen-Space Provision - Proposed & Existing Upgrade

Ward	Location	Type	Play Type	Future Teen-Space	Upgrade
Blackrock	Blackrock Park	Regional Park		X	
Dún Laoghaire	Hyde Park	Local Park	MUGA		X
Dún Laoghaire	Dir Leisure, Monkstown	Civic Space	Skate Park		
Dún Laoghaire	Dún Laoghaire Town Centre	Civic Space		X	
Dundrum	Loreto Park	District Park	MUGA		
Dundrum	Meadowbrook	Civic Space		X	
Glencullen/Sandyford	Marlay Regional Play Area	Regional Park			X
Glencullen/Sandyford	Moreen Park	Local Park	Basketball, tennis		
Glencullen/Sandyford	Fernhill	Regional Park	Callisthenics, running track	X	
Glencullen/Sandyford	Ballawley Park	Local Park	MUGA		
Glencullen/Sandyford	The Gallops	Amenity Open Space	MUGA		
Glencullen/Sandyford	Leopardstown Heights	Amenity Open Space	MUGA		
Glencullen/Sandyford	Belarmine	Local Park	MUGA		
Glencullen/Sandyford	Dir Leisure, Ballyogan	Civic Space	Skate Park		
Killiney/Shankill	Kilbogget Park	District Park	MUGA		
Killiney/Shankill	Kilbogget Park/ Coolevin	District Park	MUGA		
Killiney/Shankill	Cois Cairn	Amenity Open Space	Basketball		
Killiney/Shankill	Shanganagh Cliffs	Amenity Open Space	MUGA		
Killiney/Shankill	Old Conna Wood	Amenity Open Space	MUGA		
Killiney/Shankill	Shanganagh Park	Regional Park		X	
Killiney/Shankill	Ballinclea Heights	Amenity Open Space	MUGA		
Stillorgan	Cabinteely Park	Regional Park		X	

04

Consulting our Community



4.1 Play Consultation - Process & Feedback

Consultation for the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Play policy was wide-ranging and gathered views from a variety of residents, including children and young people, about their hopes for play provision in their local areas. In consulting with children and young people, we adopted the processes contained in the Lundy Model ensuring that the correct audience, space, voice and influence were provided to safeguard young people's rights, and having their voice heard on matters that affect their lives.

- 4.1.1 An online public survey took place from May 2022 and 30th August 2022, to which there were more than 660 responses. An in-depth analysis of the survey findings was undertaken.
- 4.1.2 A series of 6 targeted workshops was held with children and young people, one in each ward in the count, to elicit their ideas about play and recreation and with the objective of giving them a voice in the development of the new Play and Recreation Policy. A meeting was also held with incoming members of Comhairle na nÓg. The consultation was designed to ensure that young people were consulted in a manner that suited their circumstances, to inform them of the purpose of the consultation and to make them aware of the importance of their voices being included in policy development.

The workshops sought to elicit the following information:

- What young people thought about the purpose of play and recreation?
- The type of play and recreation that most appealed to young people, and what has changed in young people's lives post Covid.
- To identify the places and spaces in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown that young people currently use, what they would like to see improved and new facilities they would like to see created.

Focus group meetings were also held with the HSE, CYSPC, social inclusion groups, disability groups and the PPN membership.

The consultation was flagged on all Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown social platforms and life-sized post boxes were placed at the Lexicon Library and Cultural Centre in Dún Laoghaire, Dundrum and Cabinteely for children and young people to post their ideas.

Several planning workshops were held with staff from Community Development, Parks, Sports Partnership and Libraries to assess the 'as is' situation via an international methodology tool and to explore their ambition for future requirements.

Recommendations from national policy, the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Corporate Plan 2020-2024, other relevant local policies and plans, outputs from the stakeholder consultation and feedback from key informants contributed to the development of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Play Policy.

Analysis of findings was framed by a number of criteria including but not limited to:

- What respondents said about the importance of play / recreation for children's health and well-being– why play or recreation is important, how it makes them feel and how this could influence the allocation of resources towards play/recreational infrastructure in various areas of the county.
- Feedback on how to address safer access to and from the facilities – current spatial distribution of play provision and whether it is easily accessible?
- Feedback about areas that should be targeted for improvement works and what respondents would like to see improved in play/recreation provision.
- Respondents' views about play typologies; specific elements that need to be targeted.
- Feedback on how Covid changed the way that children play, e.g., play in their immediate vicinity / neighbourhood.
- Feedback on the extent to which play facilities and amenities were universally accessible and inclusive.

Key messages

- ✓ There is a strong culture of play with variety and quality in the county. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown has good flagship parks with a wide range of facilities and residents have an appreciation of their heritage. From the mountains to the sea: there is an attractive natural environment appealing to all and plenty of opportunities to utilise green spaces for natural play for all local residents and visitors.
- ✓ Council staff expertise is an essential resource. The ability to innovate, the flexibility and adaptability of staff was highlighted particularly throughout Covid as the parks and public realm in general were 'open for business' and acted as 'escape valves' for citizens across the county.
- ✓ There is a critical need to develop teen spaces, particularly for teenage girls, and this infrastructure should be able to meet multiple needs.
- ✓ With the ageing demographic in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, enabling multi-generational involvement as well as creating easier access to exercise etc. would ameliorate 'elder isolation'.
- ✓ Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown's external communications channels can enhance connectivity with residents locally, alerting them to play and recreation opportunities.

Covid-19 Learnings

- 4.1.3 Much of the consultation was carried out immediately after lock-down and this is reflected in the feedback received. People felt that the pandemic had caused them to re-imagine and re-evaluate the potential benefits of play and recreation, particularly when it came to spending increased amounts of time with children and young people. They acknowledged the improvement in infrastructure allowing more access to outdoor activities.

Nature play

4.1.4 Exposure to the natural environment, parks and open spaces gave residents and visitors an enhanced appreciation of their surroundings and the facilities and amenities that were available to them for free. People stressed the value of being active for mental and physical health and the importance of having play opportunities in structured and unstructured environments. Parents and guardians had noticed that their children discovered woodlands, rivers, streets and beaches. Children used creative play to express themselves, building dens and hideouts and indulged in more risk-taking. There was a trend towards niche activities like skateboarding and BMX bikes etc..

Targeting specific needs

4.1.5 One factor consistently mentioned was the need to provide for all children & young people, and age-friendly appropriate places. In general, people believe there is a lack of outdoor facilities for teenagers and places where they can 'hang out' or 'loiter' safely.

Staying 'local' increased social contact among communities and families were able to spend time together outdoors. Play areas were being used responsibly. However, the pandemic had drawn attention to surveillance of the public realm, the need to adequately light certain public spaces, increased numbers of cyclists and the potential for anti-social behaviour.

It was noted that road conditions ,i.e., kerbs and footpaths need major improvements for wheelchair users so that they can access play areas. There are restricted mobility routes in play areas. Users sometimes are forced go on the road for a while in order to get up on the path. They seek wheelchair-usable swings and merry-go-rounds for wheelchair users in playgrounds. "I have a physical disability and I am a part time wheelchair user. I need playgrounds to have more accessible places to play. I need to play too!!" Other comments Rubber ground is more user-friendly and more inclusive swings are needed.

Targeting those with additional needs

4.1.6 People with additional needs should be able to experience sensory fun and every park should have a sensory garden as well as sign communication boards to expedite noise stress. Swinging hammocks, which have a calming effect and bigger spaces are required to address needs of those with claustrophobia. Communication boards, musical play areas, smaller playframes without skinny/dangerous walk overs/bridges, which are not good for children with additional needs and balance issues, are also needed. A soft rolling area could be useful for babies/ children who can't walk. It was noted also that "play areas are not well equipped for 0-2 year olds, and babies or toddlers with disabilities like cerebral palsy, and sensory needs such as autism..."

Challenges

4.1.7 Among the challenges identified were equitable access to play and recreation opportunities from east to west of the county. Resources are required to deliver maintenance, redesign and redevelopment.

Participants emphasised the need to ensure that marginalised communities should have access to facilities. Communicating what is available and accessible to them is important.

Encouraging the diversity of children and young people's needs is essential and universal access was regularly mentioned, irrespective of age or ability.

Access for those with mobility issues together with facilities for those with auditory or sensory needs was stressed. It was acknowledged that cross-agency collaborative action would be necessary to implement relevant actions.



4.2 Play & the Pandemic

How Ireland's children made the outside world their playground.

4.2.1 On March 12th 2020, Ireland's Taoiseach, the then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar announced the first in a series of restrictions that led to full lock-down in the country with all travel and movement restricted, unless deemed essential.

This raised many questions in the minds of Park managers:

- 1 Do we close the Parks? (This would be impractical or impossible in most cases.)
- 2 Do we send all of the staff home?
- 3 Do we cease all operations, particularly grass cutting? (In March the grass cutting season was just getting underway.)
- 4 What is essential?
- 5 What about the Playgrounds? Currently we manage 33 facilities with more planned (not including 4 Community Centre Playgrounds).
- 6 What about the Playing pitches (90 in number.), All Weather Pitches (4, with one under construction), Multi use play areas, Basketball and Tennis Courts?

Most of these issues were clarified, and a picture of the lock-down was beginning to emerge. The most important early clarification was that Parks Services were deemed "Essential Services", and that people were being allowed to exercise within 2 Kilometers of their homes on a daily basis. While the Parks themselves remained open, it was necessary to close the Playgrounds, outdoor gyms, and crucially carparks to ensure that only local or walking traffic was prioritised, and that opportunities for large scale gatherings outside of family groups were minimised.



Marlay Park - Front gates locked



Marlay Park - Carpark Closed

A New Dynamic

4.2.2 And so began a new dynamic in the way Parks & Open Spaces were now being colonised and used. As people stayed at home, schools were closed, home schooling was taking place, and crucially, the areas outside the house (not always green) became the focus for families for exercise, recreation and play. The streets, paths and roads themselves became fair game.



In this strange confluence of events, something else was contributing to this takeover of the public realm, the almost complete absence of traffic. Without traffic the estate roads became play opportunities, portable goals, basketball hoops, and a whole series of other rusting (and sometimes new) play items were dragged into the middle of roads to be used shared and put away later.

Local open spaces were investigated like never before, kids were now venturing into groups of trees heretofore ignored, searching for play possibilities, tree climbabilities, and the opportunities to make dens.

The planning, effort, teamwork and ingenuity that went into the construction and decoration of this Den is wonderful to see; bedecked with a flag, inviting others to use the home made walky-talkies, and wishing happy March & April Birthdays to all in Mr. O'Neill's class. This was the most complex construction that I had seen, but I'm certain that this was replicated throughout the country.

So where are we now? Well, the playgrounds have reopened, and while the formal playgrounds are incredibly important in the provision of public play opportunities, the Pandemic and its effects have proved that there is far more to children's play than swings and roundabouts.

Ruairí Ó Dúlaing
Senior Parks Superintendent
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council
July 2020



It's free to use
the hot water
bottles
They are
so much
fun!!

BURN
THE
APRIL
15th day

String of white and red triangular flags

String of colorful paper flowers

Colorful paper flower



Appendices

Appendix 1 - Playground Design Guidance

CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPERS & EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

SECTION 1 - Planning

Site Selection

Based on development size and layout. Consideration and guidance should be taken from Strategic Priority no. 1 and no. 2 as per this Play Policy document when selecting location.

SECTION 2 - Design

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Pleasant Setting / Attractive site		1	1	1
Signage - playful, Site specific	Appropriate signage - tying in with park name - park logo - theme name - graphics & symbols over text - outline key elements i.e., control of dogs, no alcohol, no smoking, no littering - dlr branding must be utilised & dlr signage shall be approved as part of the Taken in Charge process but not before	P	P	P
Immediate outlook is mainly green / open space	Parklands - woodlands - coastline - meadows -	1	1	1
Safe & Secure	1. Good passive surveillance 2. Assessment of closeness to water courses, roads, rail lines, power lines	p	p	1
Accessible	Public Transportation links - active travel - safe walking & cycle links - dedicated road crossings universal access	p	p	1
Demand / need for facilities	Dependent on development size. Other influences proximity to schools, care homes, etc	1	1	1
Gateway elements	Archway structures, gates, threshold design	1	1	1
Free from traffic pollution	Far enough away from roads / rail lines	1	1	1
Free from noise pollution	Far enough away from roads / rail lines	5	4	3
Min. Required Score		5	4	3

2) Universal Accessibility & Inclusivity

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Designated car parking	Dependent on development size	1	1	1
Access Paths - links		P	P	P
Appropriate Play surfacing		P	P	P
Gateway entrances & general arrangement in accordance with disability best practice		P	P	P
Integrated and accessible play equipment & features	Equipment that caters for larger persons, multi person slides	P	P	P
Communication boards	These should be in line with the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists guidance ' <i>Visual Communications Displays in Playgrounds</i> '	1	1	1
Seating & tables facilitating wheelchairs		1	1	1
Safe & quiet spaces		1	1	1
Sensory elements		P	P	P
Min. Required Score		4	4	2

3) Facilities

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Seating - Adult, elderly	Back and arm rests	P	P	1
Seating - Teenage focused	Feature elements of interest - perches & lounges	1	1	P
Seating - Child focused	Scale appropriate - theme related -	1	1	1
Cycle / Scooter Stands	Sheffield stands - cargo bikes - Scooter stands	P	P	P
Outdoor eating facilities	Picnic tables	1	1	1
Min. Required Score		2	2	2

4) Natural Play

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Use of Landform	Earth mounding - depressions in ground	1	1	1
Woodland setting	Trees for climbing - logs and fallen trees - tree swings - dens - conker collection - rootery	1	1	1
Natural features	Ditches - dry riverbeds - hills -	1	1	1
Water courses	Bridges - stepping stones - twig racing - tyre swings	1	1	1
Vegetation	Trees - hedges - meadows - amenity grass - shrubs - fruiting bushes - orchards	P	P	1
Boulders	Assessed when selecting in terms of sharp edges, cracks etc.	1	1	1
Min. Required Score		3	3	1

5) Biodiversity & Education

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Bat boxes	Proposed location and bat box to be assessed by ecologist prior to installation	1	1	1
Bug hotels		1	1	1
Stick piles		1	1	1
Information boards		1	1	1
Pollinator friendly planting		P	P	1
Hedgehog highways		1	1	1
Ecological Pond		1	1	1
Outdoor classroom / reading corner		1	1	1
Orchards - fruiting shrubs		1	1	1
Min. Required Score		5	5	2

6) Physical Play - Fundamental Movement

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Running - skipping - hopping		1	1	1
Climbing		1	1	1
Swinging		1	1	1
Jumping		1	1	1
Balancing		1	1	1
Crawling		1	1	1
Gliding		1	1	1
Rocking		1	1	1
Rotating / Spinning		1	1	1
Min. Required Score		7	7	4

7) Older Children - Teenagers - Young Adults

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Hang-out zone	Integrated into parkland landscape, seating, picnic tables, lounge structures, swings	1	1	P
Ball Play Area		1	1	1
BMX / Pump Track / Cycle Track	Integrated into parkland landscape	1	1	1
Skatepark	Integrated into parkland landscape	1	1	1
Parkour	Integrated into parkland landscape	1	1	1
Calisthenics	Integrated into parkland landscape	1	1	1
Wall	Integrated wall ball - climbing wall - street art canvas - basketball hoop	1	1	1
Teen specific play equipment		1	1	1
Music related equipment	Percussion instruments, sound poles	1	1	1
Min. Required Score		-	-	3

8) Intergenerational Elements

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Games tables	Chess - draughts - table tennis	1	1	1
Boules		1	1	1
Outdoor Fitness		1	1	1
Min. Required Score		-	-	-

9) Creative Play

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Sand or Soil		1	1	1
Water		1	1	1
Space for chalking / drawing / painting		P	P	1
Musical spaces or equipment		1	1	1
Performance area		P	P	1
Pretend Play		1	1	1
Building / transforming the environment		1	1	1
Min. Required Score		2	2	1

9) Social Play

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Quiet places / hang-out spaces		1	1	1
Places to hide		1	1	
Opportunities to interact and collective problem solving		P	P	1
Min. Required Score		-	-	1

10) Risk & Challenge

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Opportunities for exciting & challenging play		P	P	1
Various degrees of risk taking		P	P	1
Min. Required Score		-	-	1

11) Materials & Workmanship

1 Location P Prerequisite

Item	Description	0-5	6-11	12-18
Safety surfacing	Inclusive playground elements must be accessible	1	1	1
Surfacing	Creative surfacing, i.e., colourful, embossed, site specific	1	1	1
Boundaries	Should be appropriate to the site location and risk. Chestnut pale fencing - Willow / hazel hurdles - stone wall - ditches - Ha-ha - hedgerow - railings	1	1	1
Wood	FSC Certified - Robinia or equivalent	p	P	P
Sustainable materials	Demonstrate that locally sourced materials and craftsmanship have been used	1	1	1
Min. Required Score		2	2	2

	0-5	6-11	12-18
Minimum Threshold score. All prerequisite items must be delivered in addition to achieving the min. score. Each category min. score must be achieved.	30	29	22

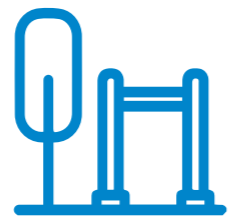
SECTION 3 - On-going management / maintenance

RPII H&S Assessments	Annual / biannual / quarterly inspections with accompanying report & recommendations
Inspections	Daily visual inspections / weekly physical inspections with reports
Safety surfacing top-up	Bark mulch top-up
Horticultural maintenance	Programme to be prepared
Litter & graffiti clean-ups	Daily graffiti inspections, to be addressed as they occur

Appendix 2 - Glossary

Cruinniú na nÓg	A national day of free creativity for children and young people under 18
Fixed Play Space	A space dedicated for play, populated with prescribed play elements.
Hub na nÓg	A national centre of excellence and coordination on giving children and young people a voice in decision-making.
Inclusive Play Spaces	A universally designed, sensory-rich environment that enables children & young people to develop physically, socially and
Play Places / Spaces	A space that promotes play in all its forms. It does not necessarily have to be a fixed play space.
Play sufficiency	Sufficient & appropriate play opportunities for children in their areas.
Play Value	An assessment of the value of an environment, space, object or piece of equipment brings to children's experience of play.

exercise equipment



free of charge

barbeques
climbing
ball games



dog walking

be **active** away from phones, iPads and computer games



community fun and interaction

safe hangout areas



skate parks

make connections

bowling green

calisthenics

inclusive playgrounds for children with additional needs

sensory play



playgrounds for young children

pump tracks

a space where children can go hang out with **friends**

chess

community



outdoor table tennis

tennis courts

MUGA's track & field

picnic tables

all-weather pitch

music

