

PlayZones

Engagement Report

Phase 1



NOVEMBER 22

Dover District Council
Authored by: Freya Donovan



Introduction

As highlighted in the [2023 to 2027 Dover District Council Corporate Plan](#), the district Council has dedicated itself to “*enabling our communities' long-term sustainability and resilience*”. We know that the health and wellbeing of our communities is critical to this sustainability and acknowledge that sport and exercise have a massive part to play, impacting on both the physical and mental health of our residents.

Within Dover, we currently have 6 council owned MUGAs. The aim of this project is not only to revitalise these spaces, but to bring these statistics to the attention of everyone within the district, with the purpose of promoting positive behavioural change for everyone regardless of socio-economic status.

In developing our current offer, and enhancing accessibility to activities within the Dover District, we will organically promote more participation from our communities, in which over a quarter of the population do less than thirty minutes of daily basic exercise, such as going for a walk. Furthermore, evidence provided by Public Health, NHS and the House of Commons Library, highlighted that 10% of 4 – 5-year-olds in DDC are registering as obese. This statistic does not stand alone as by the time these young people reach the age of ten the percentage of obese rises to a staggering 23.5%. This means that for every 10-year-old in the district 234 are clinically obese.

This may not sound a lot, but the data also states that for the first time in 16 years the increase has been sharp with no sight of a plateau. Additionally, to this and in conjunction with further reports, as an area at the lower end of the affluent scale the general population is 72% overweight in one form or another.

The evidence of need for this project can also be evidenced through the Council’s Inspire project, which has been running for 7+ years and has supported 2500+ young people in the Dover District. The project is and continues to be a success in our District with a well-recognised brand, over 200 referral partners with new referrals received each week to start a new young person's journey with a new activity.

We can showcase the success by including data taken directly from the Inspire Project below, from one of our Lower Super Output Area's, the Buckland ward. In 2023, Buckland alone has had 50 individuals referred through the project giving them access to a new activity and opportunity which they would not have been able to access without Inspire. We have received many comments and positive feedback from referrers and family members of the Inspire participants stating how the project has made a positive difference to their behaviour, self-esteem, and confidence among other things. The

young people themselves have stated how much they enjoy the project and are thankful for it.

It's these referral partners that will make up our PlayZone consultum, alongside a number of specific partners like for example local schools, community centres, youth groups.

Going forward, this report provides an overview of our engagement process, including discussions with various communities. We've analysed potential improvement pitches and activation strategies, summarizing the demonstrable need for each of the five proposed PlayZones.

After careful consideration during the consultation, we have identified five promising pitches for the PlayZones investment:

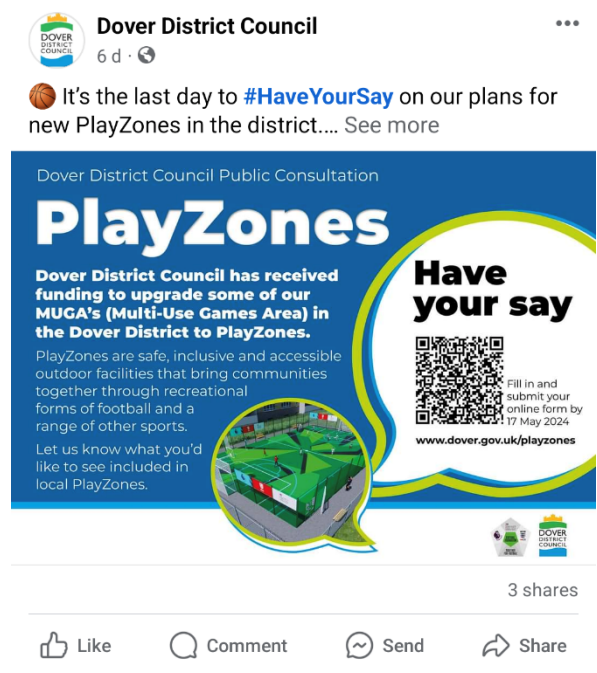
- Sheridan Road - Buckland, Dover
- Elms Vale Recreation ground - Dover
- Aycliffe Recreation ground - Dover
- North Deal Playing Field - Deal
- The Butts - Sandwich

Consultations

Throughout May, we facilitated a wide consultation, calling for responses on the proposed PlayZone sites, at the below locations:

- Sheridan Road - Buckland, Dover
- Elms Vale Recreation ground - Dover
- Aycliffe Recreation ground - Dover
- North Deal Playing Field - Deal
- The Butts - Sandwich
- Victoria Park - Deal

As well as promoting the consultation generally, through various social media platforms. We also successfully focused responses around the proposed sites, we erected a number of signs highlighting the scheme, and how residents can submit their views.



To ensure the consultation was accessible to all, we intentionally minimized the number of questions, to encourage greater participation. We also delivered a range of targeted pop-up events, alongside our well-established Community Roots Van, after school hours, as we believed this timing would yield the highest engagement with both children and parents.

Our Community Roots Van has proven to be an invaluable resource during consultations, garnering widespread use. This fully equipped mobile office on wheels, aptly named the

Community Roots Van, serves a critical purpose: to bring council services directly to communities across the Dover District. By doing so, it addresses social isolation and promotes digital inclusion within these communities.

The van actively participates in community events, offering advice, support, and even moments of fun! Its presence ensures that residents in rural areas can access council services 'on the road,' complementing existing online, telephone, and office-based channels. Notably, our digital services have yielded a higher response rate in the consultation, benefiting those without devices or internet access. Additionally, we've provided valuable assistance to individuals seeking clarification on PlayZones related questions.



Summary

In our consultation results, we observe the popularity of various sports across different locations. Football emerges as the clear favorite, with 283 respondents expressing their preference for it. Basketball follows closely with 124 votes. Additionally, 155

participants mentioned that they currently utilize the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) as a hangout space. Beyond football and basketball, other sports such as badminton, tennis, cricket, cycling, dance, and netball were also mentioned.

As well as this, we tracked the usage of the pitches, and the most common response was weekly, closely followed by daily usage. See below for a breakdown of these responses.

2. How often do you currently use the existing MUGAs across the Dover District?

[More Details](#)

● Daily	135
● Weekly	155
● Fortnightly	26
● Monthly	46
● Never	54



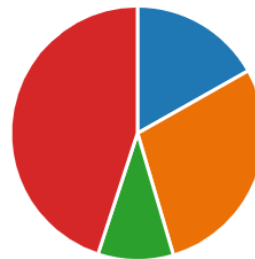
It appears that the majority of responses were from individuals aged 25 and older, with a total of 187. The next largest group consisted of ages 10 to 16, with a count of 119. See below for the breakdown chart.

1. What is your age range?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

● 5-10	70
● 10 - 16	119
● 17 - 25	40
● 25+	187



We also thought gathered some ideas from the community around features they would like to see on offer. Unsurprisingly, seating emerged as the most popular suggestion, with a whopping 329 responses! Additionally, other notable ideas included “shade, Wi-Fi availability, a medical area, a sensory zone, restroom facilities, and shelters.”

Other community members who do not use the facilities raised safety concerns regarding the gravel flooring, which has been deemed unsafe and prone to causing

injuries. Additionally, some young people reported instances of anti-social behavior exhibited by older teenagers and adults.

Reflections

During this initial consultation, we mainly focused on the potential sites themselves, to ensure we isolated those that will get the most use and will have the largest sense of ownership within our communities.

Reflecting on our approach, we could have identified the predominant sports in each location before compiling this report. Additionally, broadening the age ranges to encompass lower socio-economic groups would have been beneficial for pitch utilization. Also, incorporating gender data from respondents would have allowed us to assess pitch usage more comprehensively. However, this is something we look forward to including in our next consultation, once the PlayZones sites have been confirmed.

Next, as mentioned above, one important bit of feedback we consistently received was around the safety concerns related to each pitch and the quality of flooring. Our goal is to address these concerns by upgrading all of the selected pitches, thereby encouraging more members of the community to access these areas.

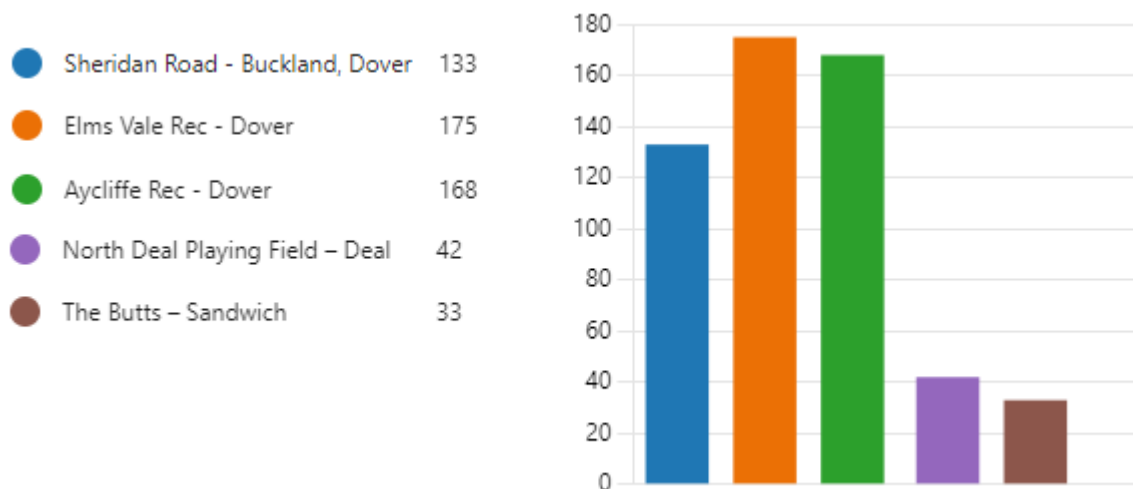
While conducting consultations, we were surprised by the number of people who were unfamiliar with what a MUGA is and its significance. Engaging with the community during this period allowed us to educate individuals, providing them with a clearer understanding of our upcoming initiatives.

Identified sites

After careful consideration during the consultation, we have identified five promising pitches for the PlayZones investment:

- Sheridan Road - Buckland, Dover
- Elms Vale Recreation ground - Dover
- Aycliffe Recreation ground - Dover

- North Deal Playing Field - Deal
- The Butts - Sandwich



Next steps

Going forward, we're very much looking forward to establishing our PlayZone consultum, ensuring key partner agencies can engage through the lifecycle of the project. Some partners in our growing consultum list include but are not limited to:

- Kent Police
- KCC Community wardens
- One You Service
- NHS

- Social Prescribers
- Kent FA
- Active Kent
- KCC Youth & Community
- Green Park Primary School
- Aycliffe Primary School
- Sandown Primary School
- Sandwich Infant & Junior Schools
- Local sports Clubs (sport dependant)
- Buckland Community Centre
- Golf Road Centre
- Sandwich Age Concern
- Crosslinks Youth Group
- KCC Cllrs
- DDC Cllrs

After analyzing our initial consultation results, our next steps include following up our initial consultation with stage 2. By revisiting the areas and communities we've developed strong relationships with, we'll develop enhanced user statistics, and a clearer picture of the sports that are most popular. As a consultum, this will help guide our decision on the appropriate surface to install in each location.