



Pac-a-Map

unfolding play



A resource for mapping
local play opportunities



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Pac-a-Map is about playful conversations; it's about play past and present, and about favourite places to play – old and new. Pac-a-Map is all about conversations between friends, between generations and in communities.



Pac-a-Map is an ELPA project supported by Inspiring Scotland





*A simple, effective tool
for talking about play*

visually engaging

Ideal in many contexts



What is Pac-a-Map?

Pac-a-Map is a simple resource which aims to open up conversations about experiences of play and play spaces.

Pac-a-Map gathers information which can be used to:

Stimulate conversations about play spaces in local communities

Inform priorities and future projects

Support the development of local Play Strategies and Action Plans

Highlight issues surrounding play such as accessibility and inclusion.

Pac-a-Map highlights the value and importance of play for children and young people and shines a light on their experiences.

It is an engaging resource for reminiscence activities and for conversations between older people and younger ones, whether between a grandparent and grandchild or older people and a school class.

Pac-a-Map is based on the idea of local knowledge contributing to a stronger voice for play.



Setting off with your map



Pac-a-Map can be used in diverse settings. It is suitable for talking about play at community events, in schools, childcare and early learning settings, youth projects, reminiscence projects and as part of wider consultations.

You will need:

- A large scale map or site plan of the area you are interested in
- Luggage labels – from stationary and craft shops or buy online
- Sticky tape to attach your labels to the map
- Post-it notes work well too – make sure you secure them before folding the map away or they will fall off
- Spare sheets of paper to collect drawings and longer pieces of writing
- Selection of pens and pencils
- Large backing board or display board to be able to put the map onto, or a large enough table to work around or enough space to lay it out on the floor
- Table and chairs are useful and can make the activity more inclusive
- Strong polythene, a portfolio or other carrier to pack up carefully and protect your map at the end of the activity
- A selection of blu-tac, drawing pins, string, scissors etc. is always a good idea too to cover all eventualities
- A camera to capture photographs of people interacting with the map
- A dictaphone can be handy to capture the stories, ideas and feedback from participants.

Tips for Maps

Your map should be at least A1 in size preferably A0.

You could try:

Cycling or walking maps

Local council planning department for a large scale map

Local archives for historical maps

The National Library of Scotland has a fantastic resource at: www.maps.nls.uk

For a school or community setting, ask the Head or Manager for a site plan.

Ordnance Survey Maps can be found in bookshops and outdoors shops or at: www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk

Talk to a print firm about printing a map onto fabric or oil cloth for something different

Or try making your own!

Public and community events, schools and clubs

Pac-a-Map works well at public events such as play days, street fairs, markets and local galas and festivals.

You will need:

- To arrange a stall or pitch in advance with the organisers
- To work out your 'Plan B' for poor weather
- To check whether you need Public Liability Insurance for the event
- A friendly, personable facilitator to encourage people to join in
- Ideally, an extra person to scribe or take photos.

You might:

- Create a large banner or even a sandwich board!
- Decorate with bunting, flags, balloons
- Give away play leaflets, posters or small gifts (pens etc.)
- Make a display of local historic photos of spaces where people play – these will also help to prompt memories and ideas about play
- Organise some play activities to go along with your stall – hopscotch, chalk drawing, loose parts play, traditional games, giant bubbles, skipping ropes, elastics etc
- Borrow additional resources from ELPA if you are in East Lothian.

If you are running the activity at a school or club you should think about how you will run the activity:

- Will it run on a drop-in drop-out basis (so children/adults are involved for just as long as they choose)?
- Will it be more structured?
- How many children/adults can join in at one time?
- How will you start and finish the activity?
- Have you talked to staff about how you are planning to run the activity and what their role will be?

Think about how you are going to draw attention to your stall.

Exploring



Using the labels

The idea of the labels is to turn the basic map into a rich collection of people's memories, ideas and comments.

You will probably start by asking some prompter questions and sparking conversations.

If you include pictures of key places on the map, it can help people to orientate themselves and prompt discussion.

When ready, encourage people to write or draw their play ideas/memories on their labels.

Ask them to stick the labels onto the appropriate place on the map – for example, if the river bank was a favourite childhood haunt, stick the label there.

To get more detail, ask follow up questions.

For example, if you are asking about special places you could ask people to write on the label why a place is special as well as where it is and what they do there.

Sometimes people describe things in a really interesting way when they speak but then don't write it down in the same way. It's fine to write it down for them – just say something like...

"I loved the way you described that – can I write it down?"

Some prompter questions:

- Where do/did you like to play?
- Who do/did you like to play with?
- What do you remember about that?
- What has changed since you were a child?
- Can you show us on the map?
- Are there/were there special places where children play?
- Are there/were there places forbidden for playing?
- Does that place have a name? What do you call it?
- What does/did it smell like? Sound like? Look like? Feel like?

Ask questions

You might also need to prompt by saying things like:

- We're interested in all the places that are good for playing – not just parks and playgrounds
- In some settings you may need to think about whether children will feel safe to be open about play. For example, will children's views be welcomed or met with disapproval or a telling off?

Walkabout



We found 'walkabout' activities particularly fruitful to complement Pac-a-Map.

"We went on a walkabout with a small group of children around their community to photograph the places and spaces in which they play. Afterwards, the images from the walkabout were printed and put on to the map which helped to make the map more visual.

Having the walkabout allowed natural play to occur whilst we were out and about in the community which was then relayed back to the other children. This encouraged deeper thinking and further exploration of play within the group".

Other top tips:

- Children are very capable of co-facilitating Pac-a-Map activities once they have taken part in the activity themselves
- In advance ask children/adults to bring in pictures of their favourite/frequent/remembered play spaces to add to their map and prompt discussion
- Pac-a-Map can influence direct action in which adults and children can work together to campaign for change
- Parents/carers like having additional information made available during events (information leaflets, play quotations, pictures)
- Providing an activity alongside the Pac-a-Map consultation can help to entice families over and to keep them engaged for longer especially when using Pac-a-Map at bigger events
- It can help to have an additional wider map (i.e. of the whole county or country) as people often like to talk about places or experiences outwith the focus of the local event
- Be prepared to change the set-up of Pac-a-Map to suit the space and environment
- Pac-a-Map can work in the smallest of spaces with a minimum amount of set up
- The use of the word 'consultation' can put people off so you might use 'activity' or 'session' instead
- People are usually very interested to see what other people are identifying as good places to play and to listen to each other's stories of play
- Older generations have so many stories of play to share which highlight the changing dynamics of play.



Where are you going next?

Maps that have been worked on in this way look very appealing and can be made into displays for local venues such as Museums, Libraries and Council Chambers.

Tips for displays:

- Make sure all the elements are securely attached
- Type up some of the labels on to sheets to make them easier to read
- Laminate things to protect them!
- Leave out a comments book so that people can add their own experiences and memories
- Have someone in attendance at least some of the time to talk about the map, play, what you did it for, etc.

There are lots of ways to make the display as engaging as possible for example additional photos, a display of old toys, labelling, questions such as:

"can you find where the grandfather fell off the tree swing?"

"where is the bridge children play at 'echoes'?"

Always think about accessibility – is the writing big enough to read easily?
Are you able to have some elements translated into languages used locally?
Is the display visual as well as written? Are there things to pick up and touch?

Staff in libraries and museums have lots of expertise in making good displays, or find the person in your group with a good eye for this sort of thing.



*Pac-a-Map
where next?*

Using the information gathered to improve play opportunities

Pac-a-Map provides a simple way to gather information to inform and influence decision-making. The information gathered can be made into a more accessible format by typing it up and including some photos.

To make a more powerful report it can be useful to:

- **Provide a general overview** e.g. how many people were involved? Was there a high level of interest? Use a simple tally sheet to track the interactions
- **Summarise common themes that emerged** (e.g. older people remember being able to play around the village much more freely than children do now; lots of people were upset when the big trees were cut down; children were generally satisfied/dissatisfied with playgrounds, etc.)
- **Include some direct quotes** of interest or that illustrate particular points
- **Have some concluding points** or say what you would like done with the information (e.g. "we would ask that this be considered when designing the new play area").

If you have run Pac-a-Map sessions in a range of places you can pull together the information to compare and create a richer overall picture (for example comparing the experiences of older and younger generations, families with children with additional support needs, new arrivals in a community etc).

Next steps:

The Maps are ideal as the basis for conversations between children and young people and local decision-makers – Elected Councillors, Community Partnerships, Community Councils, etc.

They can be used to feed into development of local policies and strategies such as those for play, greenspace, transport and housing etc.

They provide great evidence for funding applications and project development.

They can highlight the need for better design, planning or programmes and can prompt play initiatives such as introducing 'play welcome' and 'great place to play' signs.

The completed map can be displayed for people to add to over time or to revisit to compare for changes in the community.

ELPA's first play map

The play map was created using a large scale map of the local area, during a 'Support from the Start' Pop Up Play event. We invited members of the public to help develop the map.

The resulting map showed places where children play now and where parents, older generations and community members played in the past.

The Play Map brought rich information and prompted conversations about the types of places children enjoy, 'lost' play spaces in the community and patterns of play.

It was then displayed in the John Gray Centre, Haddington.

Later we had great fun testing the Pac-a-Map concept with:

**Haddington Support from the Start –
Magic in the Park Play Event**

**East Lothian Museums –
John Muir for Under 5's**

Ormiston Fun Friday Group

**North Berwick Support from the Start
Coffee Morning**

Tranent Living Well in Later Life Event

Wallyford Primary School

"We play
echoes at the
echo bridge"

"My best place
to play is my
granny's garden.
There is a
play house"

"We always
used to play at
the 'beach'
beside the river"





About East Lothian Play Association

ELPA works to promote children's right to play (article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

We believe that all children, including disabled children and children from marginalised communities, have the right to play.

We promote children's right to play by:

- Supporting play events such as National Play Day
- Organising training and development activities
- Lending play resources
- Acting as a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas
- Linking into strategic and policy developments impacting on play

Everyone with an interest in children's play can be part of ELPA whether your interest is family, professional or academic.



ELPA is a member of the International Play Association (IPA) Scotland





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Words and images by Stacey Marko and Theresa Casey, Design by Vote Pedro.



Our vision is to build a voice for play in East Lothian so that from babies to teenagers, and with parents and professionals, we ensure all children can exercise their right to play.