



Developing and managing play spaces

Community toolkit



April 2021

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- Example risk management policy
- Example risk-benefit assessment form
- Play space audit tool
- Playing out questionnaire
- Routine play space checks
- Scoring sheet - expression of interest

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Background

Who is it for?

The *Developing and managing play spaces* toolkit has been designed for anyone who takes responsibility for managing or developing a play space in a community. This may be community councils, local play associations or a residents group.

By 'play space' we mean a space that has been created with the intention of supporting children's play. This includes dedicated play areas, specifically provided for play, as well as other playable public spaces – spaces that have other functions in addition to play but incorporate playful features to also encourage playing.

Why has it been developed?

Developing and managing play spaces is intended to provide a single source of support and signposting for community groups to navigate some of the challenges of managing or developing a play space. In doing so, it aims to support people in creating and maintaining more and better designed community spaces, thereby improving children's opportunities for play.

This is the fourth edition of the toolkit, which was reviewed in 2020 to ensure the information is relevant and up to date. The toolkit was originally developed by Play Wales as part of a project to improve play spaces, working with the Community Foundation in Wales and the Big Lottery's Fair Share Panel on Ynys Môn.

How do I use it?

This toolkit has two sections:

DESIGN – focuses on new play space design and includes topics such as participation, procurement, design and risk management (often also referred to as 'health and safety').

MANAGEMENT – focuses on the mechanics of managing an existing or newly built play space and includes topics such as maintenance and inspection, risk management* and insurance.

** Risk management is a reoccurring theme in both sections of the toolkit. Children's play necessarily involves opportunities to experience risk and challenge and risk management is therefore an essential part of designing and managing play spaces. The toolkit aims to dispel some of the myths associated with risk management and sets out practical ways of developing a balanced approach to health and safety.*

See page 8 for an overview of the various stages in the design and management sections, which will help with navigating this toolkit.

What is it designed to do?

This toolkit is designed to provide clear and concise information on the main themes under the following headings:

Guidance – is a specific piece of information intended to help understand a particular aspect of play space management or development.

Tools – are practical, step-by-step guides or templates for conducting a piece of work linked to managing and developing play spaces.

***Signposting** – Provides direction to further sources of support: organisations, internet resources, downloadable resources or publications. Further information will be provided in coloured boxes like this one.*

***Myth-buster**
Classic play space myths will be addressed in boxes like this one.*

This toolkit is designed in a way you can select and use the information as and when you need. It is structured so that the information is in a logical order for stages of the design and management process. For example, participation and engagement comes before design, which in turn comes before procurement.

The Play Wales website provides access to further information and practical resources on a wide range of issues associated with children's play. New content is produced regularly, and visitors can sign up to receive email updates.

What policy or legislation supports this toolkit?

Children's Rights – The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) sets out 54 articles that define how children should be treated and how governments should monitor the UNCRC. This legally-binding international agreement applies to everyone under the age of 18. Children's rights are protected in Welsh law through the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. This measure places a duty on Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC when developing or reviewing legislation and policy.

Within the UNCRC there are three articles in particular that are useful to consider when providing for children's play:

- **Article 31:** The right to play
- **Article 12:** The right to be consulted on matters which affect them
- **Article 15:** The right to meet together.

In 2013 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published [General Comment 17](#). This document clarifies the responsibilities of national governments with respect to Article 31 rights (including children's right to play).

The General Comment emphasises the importance of children having time, space and permission for play and highlights a wide range of factors that serve to constrain children's opportunities.

Under 'factors for an optimum environment' the General Comment states children should have:

- Accessible space and time for play, free from adult control and management;
- Space and opportunities to play outdoors unaccompanied in a diverse and challenging physical environment, with easy access to supportive adults, when necessary;
- Opportunities to experience, interact with and play in natural environments and the animal world;
- Opportunities to invest in their own space and time so as to create and transform their world, using their imagination and languages.

Play Sufficiency Duty – In 2012 Wales became the first country in the world to legislate specifically in support of children's right to play with the introduction of the Welsh Government Play Sufficiency Duty. This statutory duty requires every local authority to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. This legislation builds on Wales' [Play Policy](#) (2002) and [Play Policy Implementation Plan](#) (2006).

In statutory guidance to local authorities, [Wales – a Play Friendly Country](#), the Welsh Government states:

'A rich play environment is one which is flexible, adaptable, varied and interesting. It maximises the potential for socialising, creativity, resourcefulness, challenge, and choice. It is a trusted public space where children feel free to play in their own way, in their own time, on their own terms.'

Welsh Government goes on to say that:
‘quality play provision offers all children the opportunity to freely interact with or experience the following:

- **Other children** – of different ages and abilities with a choice to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, fall out, and resolve conflict.
- **The natural world** – weather, trees, plants, insects, animals, mud.
- **Loose parts** – natural and man made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished.
- **The four elements** – earth, air, fire and water.
- **Challenge and uncertainty** – graduated opportunities for risk taking; both on a physical and emotional level.
- **Changing identity** – role play and dressing up.
- **Movement** – running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling, swinging, siding and spinning.
- **Rough and tumble** – play fighting.
- **The senses** – sounds, tastes, textures, smells and sights.’

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) – The office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales states that this legislation: *‘requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change’.*

In its [guide for young people](#), the Welsh Government recognises that for people to grow up happy and healthy, they need to have fun and that means having lots of opportunities for play.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – This legislation provides a legal framework for improving the well-being of people who require additional care and support. In [The Essentials](#)

document, the Welsh Government states that well-being includes having access to play, positive relationships with family and friends, and being part of the community.

Health and safety – Play provision is governed by the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (1999) and the Occupiers’ Liability Acts (1957 and 1984). This legislation places a duty of care on providers based on the principle of ‘reasonableness’.

The Play Safety Forum’s [Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide](#) (written by David Ball, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegel) explains that there is no legal requirement to eliminate risk even where children are concerned, as follows:

The Occupiers’ Liability Act 1957 states *‘The common duty of care is to see that the visitor (adults and children) will be reasonably safe in using the premises.’* It also states that *‘an occupier must be prepared for children to be less careful than adults.’* However, the courts do not view children as being *‘careless, incapable or vulnerable in an absolute sense.’* The Health and Safety at Work Acts only require that risks be reduced *‘so far as is reasonably practicable.’* The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 imposes a legal duty on providers to carry out a *‘suitable and sufficient assessment’* of the risks associated with a site or activity and to act accordingly.

The authors go on to say that: the Compensation Act 2006 emphasises the need for the courts to take into account the benefits of activities when considering the duty of care. The goal, then, is not absolute safety, but that measures should *‘articulate the balance between the benefit and the need for children to play against the duty of play providers to provide safe play’.*

This requirement to do what is reasonable is further supported by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who in 2012 produced a high-level statement called *Children's Play and Leisure: promoting a balanced approach*. This statement makes clear that:

- Play is important for children's well-being and development
- When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits
- Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork
- Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.

Equality – All children have a right to play but some children may require more support than others to access that right. When developing play provision, it is important to think about how

different children will access and make use of the space. The Equality Act 2010 provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunities for all. This Act brings together a number of previous pieces of legislation including the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.

Participation – The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 requires local authorities to make arrangements to promote and facilitate the participation of children and teenagers in decision making.

The National Participation Standards for Wales set out seven principles for involving children and teenagers in decision-making and explains what children and teenagers should expect when having their voices heard. This includes being supported to make informed decisions, choosing if they want to be involved, having their opinions taken seriously, enjoying the process, receiving feedback and that their views will make a difference.



Play space process

Development and design

Section 1: Play space audits

Establishing how children play in the community

Section 2: Permissions

Checking we can develop the site

Section 3: Participation and engagement

Finding what people want and getting others involved

Section 4: Forming partnerships

Finding what people want and getting others involved

Section 5: Play space design principles

Designing the space

Section 6: Principles of inclusive play space design

Designing the space

Section 7: Playground equipment standards

Understanding guidelines and standards

Section 8: Impact Attenuating Surfaces

Understanding guidelines and standards

Section 9: Procurement – the tendering process

Employing people to do the work

Section 10: Funding

Financing the project

Management

Section 11: Risk management

Understanding the responsibility to manage risks

Section 12: Risk-benefit assessment tool

Understanding the responsibility to manage risks

Section 13: Insurance

Who insures the play space

Section 14: Signage

Making sure we have the correct information on signs

Section 15: Maintenance and inspection

Understanding maintenance and inspection

Section 16: Planning spaces for play

Understanding how planning policy impacts our plans

Section 1: Play space audits



A play space audit is a valuable tool to use when managing an existing play space or seeking to develop a new space. If children already use the space for playing, there will be evidence of this. This tool is designed to help identify where children are playing, what they are doing and how often they use the space for playing. It will also help us to realise that apparent signs of neglect such as litter, broken branches on trees and graffiti may, in fact, be signs of positive use by children.

When looking to develop or refurbish a play space, being able to identify the areas, features or equipment that are most used and how they are used, will help to ensure that existing opportunities for play can be protected and maintained, as well as identifying opportunities to further enhance possibilities for play.

A well-conducted play space audit also helps in other ways. Firstly, it forms part of the participation and engagement process and can help us gain evidence to support what the community and

children are telling us. Secondly, conducted at regular intervals (for example six monthly) it can be used to help monitor how the space is being used and how often.

Thinking about ‘affordances’

The term ‘affordance’ (coined by psychologist James Gibson back in the 1960s) refers to the opportunities offered by an environment to the people in it. In this context, it is used to refer to any feature or aspect of a space that offers a possibility for play or supports play to take place. The idea of affordances is useful because it can help move our thinking beyond traditional play equipment and encourages adults to pay greater attention to the many ways in which even subtle features might present opportunities for play. For example, trees can afford opportunities for climbing, hills afford opportunities for rolling down, sand affords opportunities for digging and so on. However, what also matters is whether children and teenagers can actually make use of these potential opportunities for play.

A detailed play space audit can help to identify the possibilities for playing in a space and the extent to which children and teenagers are actually making use of them. This information can then be used to inform designs which enhance the number and range of affordances available (and therefore the range of ways in which children may be able to play) and ensure children can access all the opportunities on offer.

How to conduct a play space audit

The play space audit tool on [page 13](#) is intended for an observation that should take a minimum of 30 minutes. Ideally, this should be undertaken during different times of the day to see how different age groups use the space. For example, we can undertake an observation at a weekend or after school and another one during the day to observe pre-schoolers using the site with their parents or carers. Choosing when to undertake observations will depend on the site.

These play audits should focus on the range of affordances within the space and the range of play behaviours supported by the space, rather than just its appearance and the objects in it. There are a number of play behaviours under the 'activity observed' heading – these are described in more detail below to help with the observation.

There will be play behaviours that can be identified without needing to see children playing. For example, if children hang out on boulders or seated areas, there will be signs of wear from scuffing feet or holes dug with toes or sticks (evidence that children are making use of the opportunities available).

If the space is an appealing place for children, it is likely there are a number of factors that contribute to this. Children have told us that issues such as how well lit the space is, how close it is to homes, and whether or not there are places to shelter contribute to a sense of feeling safe and appeal to a broad age range. If this is the case, the space will need to be designed in a way that provides for that wide age range and provides for a changing demographic.

Different children will have different play interests at different times. Separating people into age and other groups is not necessarily beneficial (although some people may need particular support to access opportunities for play). Interaction between all age groups and members of society is a vital process that supports all children and teenagers to feel more confident about playing out and hanging out. Building relationships with other children and teenagers provides an opportunity to share knowledge of the people and geography of neighbourhoods and to share lore, for example, traditions of playing, rules of games or places for play. An example of this could be an old lamppost which has been used for generations as the base when playing games such as hide and seek or *What's the time Mr Wolf?*

Understanding the audit tool

Walking, travelling through space – If there is a pathway running through the space it may be that children play as they move through it even if they aren't intending to stop. Behaviours can include jumping off kerbs on bikes or scooters, swinging off trees, jumping over things, running down a bank, free running/parcours. Consider actions which change the way children travel through the space, such as re-routing a pathway, as they may encourage better or more opportunities for play.

Sitting, gathering, hanging out – Even without formal seating areas there will be places where children choose to hang out. Look for signs of wear on the ground near seating areas, under climbing frames, at the base of trees/boulders or items brought in to the space such as pieces of carpet, crates or buckets that could be used as chairs. Where there are no current obvious opportunities for formal seating areas, or gathering places, creating these will help to make the space a more social place that can be used by a wide range of ages – from families with younger children to older children hanging out and chatting with their friends. Seating should be placed in circles, U or L shapes to encourage social play – placing benches in a line does not reflect how people like to gather and socialise.

Riding (bikes, scooters, skateboards) – Observe how children are using bikes in the space. Are they used just as transport to the space or are they being ridden in and around the site? What features are they using to ride down, jump, skid on? Is there evidence of construction from children – such as mud ramps and timber? Are there any improvements that can be made to support wheeled play opportunities in an informal way?

Use of natural features (for example trees, bushes, mounds, hills) – What existing natural features are being used? Look for informal access points into wooded areas, and under trees/ bushes for signs of litter or items brought in to the space that could show den building activity or secret spaces. Wear on bark or bases of trees and broken branches on trees show evidence of children climbing them. Are there things up in the trees such as planks of wood, rope, fabric? Is there a way to increase such natural features by planting that will create more play opportunities?

Playing with the elements – Do children have access to a range of natural elements to play with? Children have a fascination with the natural world and should have the opportunity to experience water, earth (mud), fire and air. Does the site provide access to any or all of these? Are there ways these elements can be incorporated using a sensible and balanced risk management approach?

Use of the senses (taste, smell, sight, sounds and textures) – Observe how children move through the space. Rustling leaves, sand, touching bark, feeling cold metal, rolling in grass, and playing with shadows all provide opportunities for sensory play.

Movement – How do children move when they are in the space? There should be a range of opportunities to move in different ways in your play space, for example running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling, swinging, sliding, dancing and chasing.

Rough and tumble – Children learn about their own physical limitations, strength, controlling anger and boundaries through rough and tumble. This can come in many forms including play fighting, cops and robbers, chasing, hide and seek. It will be clear from laughter, smiles and other facial expressions that this is a game and the children are treating it as such.

Risk and challenge (physical) – Are children experiencing increasing levels of challenge? This doesn't need to be high risk activity – it can be as simple as a toddler building up from jumping off the bottom rung of a ladder to the second and then the third. Where there are opportunities for children to take physical risks, they will generally look for ways to improve and increase the challenge. For example, a bike ramp made of bricks and planks of wood will soon have more bricks added as children's confidence grows.

Playing with props/loose parts – Is there evidence of children bringing props in from outside to enhance their play? This could be rope for a swing or wood for a den, toy cars to build a road in the mud or using natural elements such as stones, flowers, leaves, berries to build small worlds, potions or simply to create a pile or sort and categorise items.

Playing with identity – Are children playing with who they are and what they look like? This could be role play games, such as mummy and baby, doctors and nurses, soldiers, power rangers or changing how they look with mud on their faces, dressing up games or pulling faces.

Walking dogs – Is the space used for dog walking by children or adults? Is there evidence of dog fouling? If so, we may need to consider ways to minimise the impact of this. For example, dog waste bins, signs, working with dog wardens, boundaries to the play space.

Action planning

At the end of the Play space audit tool there is a table to develop an action plan based on the play space audit. Whether the space is an existing one seeking improvement, or a new one to be developed, or even if simply assessing how the space is used as part of regular monitoring, there will be actions you can take to either **develop** or **protect** the opportunities available. The action plan is divided in a way that actions can be sorted under these two headings and provides examples of how it can be used.

The second section of the action plan allows us to identify things from our audit and observations that inform us how children and teenagers play and use the space. These observations can be used as evidence towards consultations. For more information refer to Section 3 on participation and engagement on [page 18](#).



Play space audit tool

Name of site:			Site observation made by:	
Site observations:	Observation day and date:	Observation period (e.g. school holiday/ after school/during school day/weekend/ evening):	Time of observation period:	Weather:
Key features and affordances of the site:	Brief description of the main features and affordances of the site including access points (such as slopes, trees, shrubbery, vantage points, areas to hide, things to climb up or clamber over, seating and gathering points, level areas; as well as any manufactured play equipment features that may have been installed). Note any specific areas of usage shown, for example worn grass, broken branches, bike tracks, litter, graffiti. These can be further detailed below in any activity observations made.			
Usage by children, teenagers and adults: (numbers)	Male:	Female:	Approx. age (e.g. Under 5, 5-8, 8-13, 13-15, 15+):	Total:
Children / teenagers in a group:				
Solo children / teenagers:				
Accompanied by adults:				
Adult only:				

Behaviours observed by the presence of children and teenagers:		If not present, record of signs of children and teenagers being there and making use of site:
Walking, travelling through space:		
Sitting, gathering, hanging out:		
Riding bikes, scooters, skateboards:		
Use of natural features (e.g. trees, bushes, mounds, hills):		
Playing with the elements (water, earth [mud], fire and air):		
Use of the senses (taste, smell, sight, sounds and textures):		
Movement (for example running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling):		
Rough and tumble:		
Risk and challenge (physical):		
Playing with props/loose parts:		
Playing with identity:		
Walking dogs:		

Play Provision Action Plan – How do your observations contribute to evidence about what children/the community want?	
Evidence of provision required	Actions
For example – Observations show that children enjoy climbing trees at the edge of the site.	For example – Ensure that design brief asks play designer to maintain access to the trees.



Section 2: Permissions



To develop a site it is essential to ensure appropriate permissions to use the land. If we do not already know the landowner, we can contact the local authority and/or the Land Registry to find out (there may be a fee required for the information).

Once ownership of the land has been established, we check with them what arrangements need to be made regarding leasing or buying the land. Leasing refers to a financial arrangement between the landowner and us for use of the land. The cost of leasing can be a significant sum of money. A 'peppercorn lease' is another option, where a small financial contribution is required to make the agreement legally binding but where the landowner isn't looking for financial gain from the arrangement.

We also need to establish who will be taking responsibility for maintaining the grounds and any equipment that is placed on it. See also Maintenance and inspection on [page 53](#), Forming partnerships on [page 24](#), and Risk-benefit assessment on [page 50](#).

If leasing the land and/or maintaining the equipment ourselves we need to identify how this will be funded. Explore if it's possible to apply for a maintenance/leasing budget as part of an application for the development of the site.

The types of organisations/individuals who may own land that we are looking to develop can include:

- **Local authority** – scope for negotiating terms relating to leasing, insurance, maintenance.
- **Community Council** – scope for negotiating terms relating to leasing, insurance, maintenance.
- **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** – you may be required to address how children living on the military base can make use of the play provision or whether/how community members access the site.
- **Farmers/privately owned** – arrangements with private landowners may be possible in some communities but it is recommended that legal advice is sought over responsibilities relating to insurance and maintenance in this instance.

Planning applications, land searches, surveys

Before you proceed with developments on the play space there may be additional paperwork that needs completing – some of which will cost money. The complexity and cost will largely depend on the size and location of the site and what will be placed on it.

It is best to seek advice from the local planning department on this process.

For further information on landownership, planning applications, searches or surveys, refer to the contacts listed in Who to contact for further information on [page 58](#).



Section 3: Participation and engagement



Children have a right to be consulted on matters which affect them. (UNCRC Article 12).

'Wales should be a place where children and young people are treated as valued members of the community. Their voices must be heard and their needs considered in all policy making.'
(Welsh Government website, 2011 – Participation and equality)

Participation and engagement takes many forms and asking children *'What do you want in your play area?'* is a method that generally receives a limited range of responses based on that child's experiences of play areas (a swing, a slide, a roundabout) or a list of improbable or impractical items (fast food outlets, swimming pool, an Xbox for every child in the area).

There is a range of methods that can be used with children to gain their views and involve them in planned developments. Most crucially, if we do not have previous experience of participation with children or do not feel it is a skill we have within our organisation or partnership there will be people locally who can give direct support:

- Play Officer
- Participation Officer/Team
- Children and Young People's Partnership Team
- Local school or school council
- Early years/nursery provision
- Youth club/outreach provision.

For further information on who to contact regarding participation and engagement refer to the contacts listed in *Who to contact for further information* on [page 58](#).

The Right Way: A Children's Rights Approach in Wales – This guide produced by the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales sets out a principled and practical framework for working with children based on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. It includes a specific section on participation.

[Download](#)

Participation and engagement methods

Participation can happen in a number of ways:

Workshops – Facilitating workshops with children using playful activities will enable them to feel actively involved, develop their understanding of the project and help them generate ideas for the space. This might include physical games, art and craft activities, mapping, storytelling, small group discussions, one-to-one or peer interviewing.

Observations – Providing opportunities for children to play in an area and making observations of their favoured play behaviours gives a good indication of what children like to do without taking them away from playing.

Play audits – Using the Play space audit tool on [page 13](#) provides evidence of how children already use a particular space and the action plan can be used to shape a plan based on evidence from observations as to how the space could be developed.

Building, planting, clearing – If there are elements of the play space that can be developed by the community, getting children and teenagers involved can help them shape the space and give them a feeling of ownership. Planting trees/bulbs, digging, painting, building and clearing rubbish are great ways of involving the community in the development of the play space and raising awareness of the developments being made. It may be that these sorts of community activities are where young people put forward their ideas during informal chats – ensure there is a way of recording it!

Allow for change as part of the design process

– Children and teenagers like to be able to change their environment. This is why children build dens and knock them down, constantly adapting them. Providing elements of a play space that children can keep changing ensures that they can have a direct role in the evolution of the space over time. This could be an area that is allowed to grow wild that is entirely for children's use or a BMX dirt track that they can adapt.

Questionnaires – Targeting questionnaires to a particular group of people can be a good way of ensuring a high number of responses. One way to do this is through targeting the local school and working with teachers to encourage children to complete questionnaires about where and how they like to play in their community. As with all participation methods the questions asked need to be open but specific enough to avoid gaining unrealistic responses. A sample schools questionnaire covering play behaviours is included on [page 21](#). The results of the questionnaires can help ensure the play space provides for the wider range of things children like to do – surprisingly the responses will not all be about swings and slides!

Participation – Spice it Up! is a publication developed by Dynamix and provides a range of games and workshops to run with children and teenagers to help gain their views in a fun and inclusive way.

Participation – Young Spice is a follow up publication focusing on fun participation activities for under 11s.

[Download](#)

Myth-buster

We should discourage teenagers in play spaces

If there are teenagers in the community and we are developing the play space, they will naturally be interested in it and want to hang out there. Design the space so that it also provides for teenagers and get them involved early in the process.

'I'm convinced that much vandalism happens because there is no provision for older children. So many people focus on toddler provision because they don't want to "attract anti-social youths" that there is little to interest older children. In these circumstances it wouldn't be surprising if those older children felt alienated and disaffected with their community. We have a lot of anecdotal evidence that where more exciting provision is put in place for older children, vandalism reduces.'

(Free Play Network interview with Paul Collings, Director of Timberplay, 2007)



Playing out questionnaire

Name (optional): _____

Which school do you go to? _____

What is your gender? **Boy** **Girl** **Other**

Do you think of yourself as being disabled? **Yes** **No**

Where are you allowed to play? *(please tick all that apply)*

List local places here, for example...	I'm allowed there on my own	I'm allowed there with friends	Only with an older brother or sister	Only with an adult	Not allowed to play there
Kingsbeard park					
Mannello skate park					
Greenaway shops					

What, if anything, stops you from being able to play in these places? *(please circle all that apply)*

Not allowed out	Homework	Weather	Too dark	Bullies
Older children	Other grown ups	Not allowed to get muddy	Nothing to play with	Nobody to play with
Dog mess	Too busy playing Xbox/PS3/Wii/DS	Too much traffic	Too busy with other clubs and activities	I don't like getting wet or muddy
Anything else?				

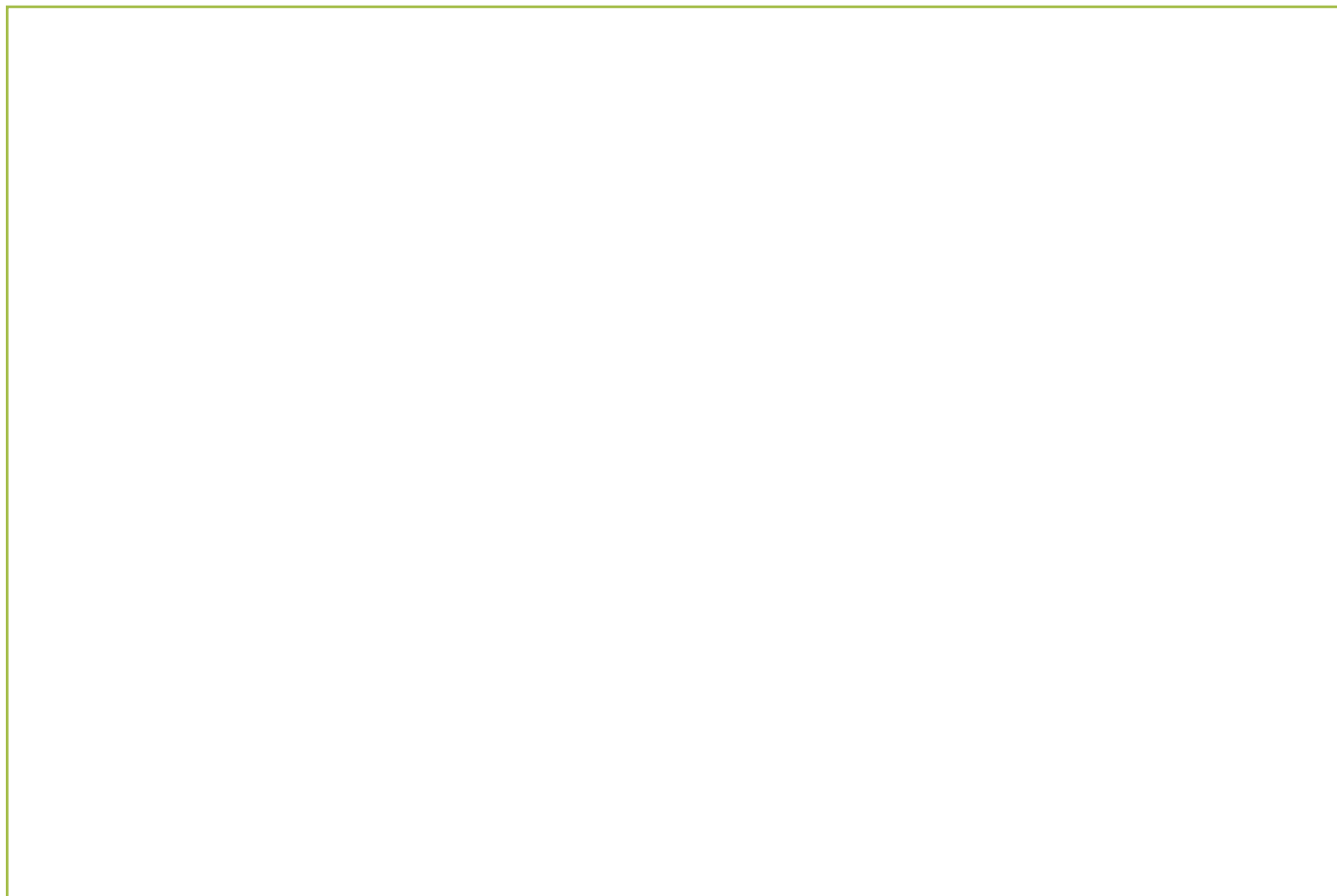
When you go out playing, what do you like to do? *(please circle all that apply)*

Bikes	Mud	Ball games	Friends my age	Older friends
Younger friends	Water	Sand	Scooters	Skateboards
Running games	Hiding games	Tip/Tag games	Chilling out	Chatting
Rolling down hills	Climbing	Trees and bushes	Swinging	Sliding
Roundabouts	Building dens	Making ramps (for bikes)	Balancing	Drawing/painting
Something else?				

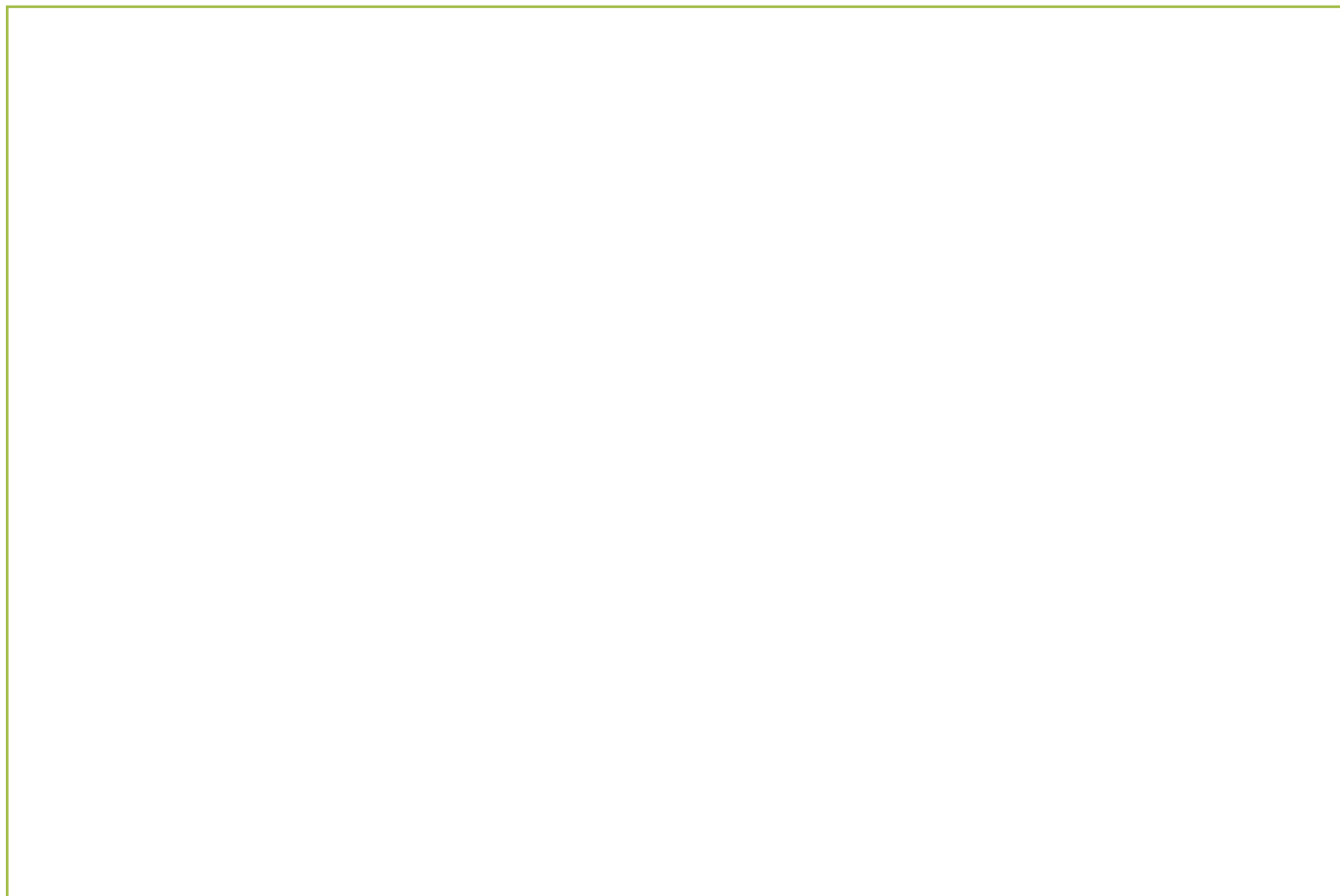
How good are these places for playing? *(Tick or circle just one answer)*

List local places here, for example...	Great – I can do all the things I like	Okay – I can do some of the things I like	Not good – I can't do many of the things I like	Rubbish – I can't do any of the things I like
Kingsbeard park				
Mannello skate park				
Greenaway shops				

How do you think we could make these spaces better?



Is there anything in these spaces that we need to protect or keep?



Section 4: Forming partnerships



When planning to develop a new play space, it is likely that we will be looking to bring a number of individuals and groups together to plan the immediate and long-term arrangements for your play space. This section looks at the types of groups and individuals we may be working with and also provides some tools for how to define roles and responsibilities and making written agreements to ensure everyone is clear on what they are meant to be doing.

Below is a list showing the types of people you may be seeking to work in partnership with and at what stages of the design, development and ongoing management process:

- Children and teenagers
- Other adult members of the community
- Residents groups
- Community Councils
- Local play associations
- Other community groups
- Local authority officers
- Housing associations
- Play/landscape designers
- Schools
- Religious/church groups.

Establishing a group

Making an open call is an effective way to get individuals or organisations involved in the development and management of the play space. This ensures everything is open and transparent and that everyone in the community has the option to contribute. Following an open meeting we can ask for people to commit to being involved in the longer term.

Skills

Look at the skills in the group – who is involved and what skills do they already have? Are there any gaps in knowledge that you may need to ask for specialist help? Those listed in the Who to contact for further information section on [page 58](#) may be able to help address any skills gaps.

Writing down roles and responsibilities

We also need to consider who will take direct responsibility for elements of the design and development process and the longer-term management and maintenance. These can be defined in a document called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the partners involved. An example MOU is shown on [page 26](#), which can be adapted to meet your needs. It may be necessary to choose to develop two MOU's – one for the design and development stage and a second for management and maintenance as the roles and individuals involved may be different.

The MOU doesn't need to be a complicated document, but it is good practice to use the headings and some of the points in the example as a guide. It is important to ensure it is clear what each person in the group is tasked with and who takes overall responsibility for critical elements like leasing, insurance, maintenance and inspection.



Myth-buster

'We can't refurbish our play area because we are concerned about the health and safety aspects of making changes'

If we have responsibility for a play space, it is very important to undertake regular risk-benefit assessments whether the features and/or equipment within the space is new or old and worn out. If equipment, surroundings or surfacing are badly worn or dangerous and nothing is done to rectify the issues, we can be sued for negligence. This may mean preventing access to some features or equipment and using funds to refurbish or remove them before progressing with any plans to redevelop the site.

Example Memorandum of Understanding - _____ Playable Space

Introduction

This project is funded by _____. The aim of the project is to develop and maintain a community play space in the area of _____ that is suitable and accessible for children and teenagers in the community.

(Insert site name and address)

Purpose of Memorandum of Understanding

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to define the method of working and roles and responsibilities of member organisations working in partnership to oversee, support and ensure the maintenance of the _____ playable space, contributing to its longer term sustainability.

The role of the partnership is to support the maintenance regime/design and development of _____ playable space to ensure that the space is able to continue to support and be effective at meeting children and teenagers' play needs. Through making risk-benefit assessments, any unnecessary hazards that may arise will be minimised by supporting the required actions needed to do so, including making checks, repairs, and environmental modifications.

The members of the group have made a commitment to contribute to an environment of openness, active participation and understanding of the specific needs of each organisation and area.

Parties making the agreement

Landowner/any other parties working to support children's playable space are:

Methods of working

1. _____ will take primary responsibility for the management of the play space and will work with partners to ensure it is well maintained and suitable for access to support children's play needs. This will include ensuring a budget to support any maintenance regime.
2. _____ will provide a caretaker to ensure a daily/weekly visual inspection of the whole play space. This will include the removal of any unnecessary litter and a visual inspection of any play equipment installed for wear and tear. Any concerns will be recorded appropriately, with identified actions needed. This will form part of any risk-benefit assessment made.
3. Risk-benefit assessments will be made and held on record by _____ and identified actions shared with appropriate staff and external parties supporting the maintenance regime.
4. Meetings (that will take place every _____) will be held with appropriate external parties supporting the maintenance regime, and will include sharing of any identified actions required for supporting the maintenance regime. (Attached as an appendix to agreement)
5. Meetings will identify the resources needed for taking any identified actions required to support the maintenance regime.
6. Appropriate external parties will be required to contribute to any risk-benefit assessments made.
7. Appropriate external parties will contribute to the maintenance of the playable space by ensuring identified specific actions are made (for example grass cutting, hedge trimming).
8. Appropriate external parties will take action to support contributing to a budget and/or resources necessary to support the maintenance regime.

Organisation – Who?	Role – What?	Responsibility

Declaration

We the undersigned agree to the arrangements in this document.

Signed _____

Date _____

Section 5: Play space design principles



Design for Play

There is detailed guidance on the process of designing play spaces in Play England's publication *Design for Play*.

[Download](#)

Following the development of a partnership and the start of involving local people in plans for the play space, we need to consider the design process.

Remember when talking about play spaces, these could be places with play equipment or they might just be landscaped and include some playable features. They also could be designated play

areas or part of the wider public realm. When we ask children and adults about playing outside, it is generally interactions with the natural world that are mentioned as being of the greatest enjoyment. Climbing trees, building dens, making mud pies, damming streams, water fights, rolling down hills and making daisy chains are some of childhood's simplest pleasures.

'Children's playgrounds often look remarkably similar across the UK, and the design process can be dominated by assumptions and stereotypes. A playground consisting only of basic equipment, fencing and rubber safety surfacing caters for a narrow range of play experiences. A widely held belief has developed that this is what play areas are supposed to look like.'
(*Design for Play*, 2009)

The 10 Design Principles

Design for Play highlights 10 Design Principles for designing successful play spaces. It states that successful play spaces:

1. are bespoke

They do not come straight out of a catalogue and are designed to integrate with their surroundings.

2. are well located

They are situated where they have the best chance of being used, close to homes and safe routes for walking and cycling.

3. make use of natural elements

Trees and bushes, grass, mud, sand, rocks and boulders, landscaping – all encourage a range of different types of playing.

4. provide a wide range of play experiences

Play areas with seated areas, shelter, spaces to create and space to run around provide far greater play value than a couple of pieces of equipment within a tightly fenced boundary.

5. are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children

This is not just about providing wheelchair accessibility. Natural elements provide sensory stimulation, sand and mud pits provide areas where children who have limited mobility can engage with the natural world, and steep slopes provide a challenge for those whose life is spent on flatter ground.

6. meet community needs

A play space is, and should be, seen as a space for the whole community. After all, parents and grandparents meet and congregate there so remember to include the whole community in the development of the space.

7. allow children of different ages to play together

Children's lives are often structured into age-groups, especially in school. Younger children learn best about the world from children older than them and older children benefit from the responsibility and empathy that playing with younger children brings. Intelligent play space design allows children to mix even if there are items that are more appealing to certain stages of development.

8. build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge

Children learn from experience and taking small risks develops this learning. We're not talking about swinging fifty children in the air, but opportunities to balance and climb and move around on uneven ground all build children's capacity.

9. are sustainable and appropriately maintained

Whether the play space is big or small, plans need to be in place from the beginning as to how the space will be maintained and sustained into the future. Will the group continue to be involved in managing the space? Are regular inspections of sand required? Is there funding to continue to develop and maintain the space?

10. allow for change and evolution

Children like to be able to change their environment to keep it fresh and exciting. This could be done by ensuring there are moveable items, including natural elements or by developing the space over a long period of time so it evolves rather than arriving on the back of a truck one day and then never changing.

Myth-buster

It is the law to put a metal fence around the site

It is not compulsory to put any kind of fence around a play space and it shouldn't be assumed that a fence is required. Instead, whether a boundary is needed and what type should be determined through a risk-benefit assessment of the surrounding area.

The reasons for choosing to include a fence or other boundary may include: the provision is for very young children and there are dangers if children run off the site, to discourage dogs from the site or if the provision is very close to a main road or deep water.

If choosing to place a boundary around the play space, select features that blend with the surroundings or more playable options. These might include: wooden fencing, dry stone walls, walls that can be climbed or hedgerows.



Section 6: Principles of inclusive play space design



Creating accessible play spaces toolkit

This toolkit is intended to support local authorities, town and community councils, politicians at all levels, open space planners, housing associations and parks and playground managers when developing and upgrading accessible play spaces. It contains information intended to help understand and address issues of concern and it provides practical, step-by-step tools and templates for undertaking work linked with removing the barriers to accessing play space faced by disabled children and their families.

[Download](#)

When developing a play space it is essential to consider the rights of all children and teenagers in the community who will, or may in the future, be using the play space. This means we need to think about how children and teenagers who have a range of impairments may be able to access the opportunities for play provided.

Two concepts that emerged from the Disability Rights movement are particularly useful to think about when developing a play space:

- **Social model of disability** – Recognises people with impairments as being disabled by a society that does not meet their needs. This model argues society needs to make changes to accommodate people with impairments.
- **Universal design** – The philosophy that through simple design measures society could become far more accessible to far more people.

The *Creating accessible play spaces* toolkit also provides a useful distinction between the terms accessible and inclusive:

- **Accessible play space** – a play space that is designed with no unreasonable environmental barriers to the space or movement within and around it. There is ease of access to the play opportunities within it. However, it does not remove acceptable challenge, which is an important feature of quality play space. An accessible play space can be used by more than one child at a time in more than one way. There are a variety of ways to move through the space and a selection of environmental features to play on, in and with.
- **Inclusive play** – inclusive play means that all children and teenagers have equal access to good quality local play provision. This means that they can play with others or alone as they wish in a rich environment that supports their play needs and gives them access to a wide range of play opportunities.

The play space has to have a quality play offer for every child and teenager. ‘Inclusion’ is a social term – it is essential to ensure access to the social experience of playing with and around other people. Not all children and teenagers need to be able to play with or on all things, but they all need the fullest possible range of play options.

Specialist equipment – thinking about how children and teenagers who use wheelchairs will access and play in the space is important. However, careful consideration should be given to purchasing specialist equipment, in particular:

- What proportion of our budget would one piece of specialist equipment cost – could we purchase several smaller items that provide a range of opportunities at the same cost?
- Do we only want to provide one play opportunity for children who use wheelchairs or would we rather have several non-specific items or features that can be used in a number of different ways by wheelchair users and non-wheelchair users?



The *Creating accessible play spaces* toolkit provides further guidance on the use of specialist equipment but below is a list of examples of traditional equipment and natural features that may be included in a play space that could offer opportunities for play to a wide range of children and teenagers.

Slides – a wider slide provides more flexible options than a traditional narrow slide. If the slide is built on a slope, an accessible pathway can be built to make access to the top easier.

Swings – basket swings take away the need for a child to be able to support their own weight as they can lie down or take someone else with them for support.

Ladders, ropes, climbing walls and ramps – we shouldn't avoid providing these in an effort to be inclusive. Providing a range of ways for children and teenagers to use equipment gives more options to access it.

The surrounding area – lighting, parking, accessible toilets, width and operation of gates/grids and dropped kerbs are elements that make entering the space easier. We may not have control over some of these elements, but they are factors to consider influencing in the longer term.

Natural features – logs, boulders, loose materials – remember that these items are 'non-prescriptive' in that they do not have a right and wrong way to play and interact with them – this allows children to interpret how to use them in their own way.

Sensory experiences – sand and water play – are fantastic sensory play opportunities for children. Children enjoy playing and lying in sand. It is also a valid Impact Absorbing Surface (IAS) so it can be placed underneath equipment, although we will need to consider if this compromises accessibility to certain equipment.

Planting, trees and shrubs – these not only look pleasant, they divide up the play space and provide further sensory opportunities. By selecting species with non-poisonous berries or leaves that fall in autumn we are also providing further opportunities for play with natural elements – some children enjoy creating and sorting with leaves, twigs and berries.

Moving around the space – design 'desire lines' (pathways and playful routes) through the site that are even and on the same level – this provides an accessible way of moving around the space. This does not mean that we can't have landscaping and less uniform ways of exploring the space but it allows for accessible social play throughout the space.

Myth-buster

Sand causes problems with cats, dogs and foxes

Unless there are already problems with cat, dog or fox mess it is highly unlikely that adding sand to the space will bring in new animals. However, if we do have sand, regular inspection/raking will form part of your routine maintenance. How often we do this will depend on the level of use. Remember also that most pet owners are responsible. If there is a problem with dog fouling it is generally a small number of owners – target the small group of dog owners that are causing the problem. We can work with the community, ask school children to design 'no fouling' signs or start a campaign supported by the local dog warden.

Section 7: Playground equipment standards



(Extracts from *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide*, 2012)

Myth-buster

If we adhere to the standards we can't be sued

European and British standards for fixed play equipment are purely guidelines to ensure manufactured play equipment meets a certain minimum standard. It is not the law to comply with these guidelines. Even if the equipment we purchase does meet the standards, it does not replace the need to conduct a regular risk-benefit assessment of the site and have regular inspections as part of our risk management policy.

There is no specific legislation on play safety in the UK, and undertaking a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment is the primary legal requirement (Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999). There are agreed Europe-wide industry standards which should always be considered when carrying out a risk assessment, and are commonly taken into account in legal cases.

Standards are important tools in managing risks and give guidance about some difficult issues. However, a misunderstanding of their role and status has created problems in the past.

PLAYLINK – Legal opinion

In 2006, PLAYLINK commissioned Counsel's Opinion from the law firm Public Interest Lawyers. They analysed PLAYLINK's play policy and approach to managing risk in play spaces. It is not a legal precedent but the informed judgement of a legal expert:

It stated that 'the proper approach to British or European standards is not to regard them as laying down a compulsory standard to be followed slavishly in all cases, but as a guideline demonstrating the general consensus as to what would constitute sensible precautions in any given case.' It continued: 'If a rational process of risk assessment, together with a balance of cost, risk and benefit can justify departure, then there would be no failure to exercise reasonable care.'

Confusion can lead those who design or commission play spaces to focus exclusively on whether or not the items can be shown to meet the standards. In the past this has led to limited use of play features that are not specifically discussed in the standards, such as logs, boulders, hard landscaping, planting or changes of level. Instead, there has been a tendency to choose equipment styles that fit most closely into those directly described by the standard, such as swings, slides, carousels, and multi-play and rocking equipment.

The key standards for play provision are:

- **BS EN 1176** – on fixed play equipment and surfacing
- **BS EN 1177** – on a method of testing for impact attenuating surfaces
- **BS EN 14974** – for wheeled sports facilities such as skate parks and BMX cycle tracks
- **BS EN 15312** – for ball sports facilities such as ball games areas.

Find out more about compliance with playground equipment standards from your registered playground inspector. Inspectors can be found via the [Register of Play Inspectors International \(RPII\) website](#). Briefings on relevant standards and associated requirements are also available on the play safety section of [The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents' \(RoSPA\) website](#).

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide

Produced by the Play Safety Forum (a group of national organisations and experts in play safety), and written by David Ball, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegel, this guide shows how play providers can develop an approach to risk management that takes into account the benefits to children of challenging play experiences, as well as the risks. It provides detailed guidance on legal requirements and approaches to conducting risk assessments of play spaces. In particular, spaces that include playable features that do not have an agreed standard such as natural features.

[Download](#)

Section 8: Impact Attenuating Surfaces (IAS)



Impact Attenuating Surfaces (IAS) refer to those provided in play spaces with the intention of reducing injuries from falling from height. They may be provided around a specific feature or across the whole play space. The provision of IAS is covered by two standards: BS EN 1176 and 1177.

BS EN 1176 recommends IAS for fall heights greater than 0.6 metres.

Myth-buster

Grass is not a suitable safety surface

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide (when referring to the 2008 version of the play equipment standard BS EN 1176) states, 'in the UK, well-maintained grass is deemed appropriate for fall heights of up to 1.5 metres, subject to a risk assessment'.

The legal position

According to the play area surface briefing on the [RoSPA website](#), whilst there is no legal requirement for IAS to be provided on children's playgrounds, it is recommended by safety organisations such as RoSPA.

RoSPA also states that '*recent out-of-court settlements arising from playground accidents have suggested the courts recognise that the provision of suitable surfaces represents good practice, especially under new equipment*'.

Accident prevention

Again RoSPA explains: '*there is no doubt that head injuries to children are reduced in severity by the provision of protective surfaces but such falls are a rare occurrence for children over five. It will not reduce accidents but may reduce the severity of injury from falls to the playground surface – that is about 50% of injuries resulting in a hospital*

visit. There is some evidence that it will not reduce long-bone fractures, especially of the upper body. About 30% of fall injuries are related to equipment. Surfacing is only of limited significance to accidents and its provision should be viewed in perspective’.

Types of surfacing

RoSPA identifies three main types of IAS for play spaces:

Grass – A good, all-purpose surface, but with little wear resistance or impact absorbency in dry conditions.

Loose-fill materials – These include sand, wood products and pea shingle. They have good impact absorbency but disperse and breakdown. They are not suitable for moving equipment. Easy to lay.

Synthetic surfaces – There are three main types:

- Tiles – generally efficient, long-lasting but can be expensive and difficult to lay.
- Wet-pour – generally efficient, long-lasting but expensive and very difficult to lay.
- Layered – generally efficient but require some maintenance and can be subject to vandalism and wear problems. Requires expert laying.

Assessing for surfacing

Provision under old equipment

IAS are expensive so before installing them for existing equipment consider:

- Compliance with relevant standards
- Play value of different types of materials and surfaces
- Site position, design and use
- Age of equipment
- Foot-print (the area under the equipment).

It is not necessary to provide IAS immediately for older equipment – but we must have a planned programme of improvement as part of a risk assessment.

Provision under new equipment

All new equipment should be provided with an appropriate surface. According to the standards, fall heights under 600mm do not require a specific IAS but it is recommended that the ground provides some impact attenuation – grass can work well in this situation. In some cases (for example springy items) some ground protection may be required, for example grass re-enforcement materials can be used.

Purchasing surfaces

It is recommended that suppliers should provide assurance that their product has been tested in accordance with BS7188 and EN1177. It should be installed to the areas given in EN1176. Copies of appropriate test certificates should be supplied on request. Obtain written assurance that the material will maintain its absorbency levels for the warranty period.

On-site testing is available, [see RoSPA's website](#) for details.

(source [RoSPA](#))

Myth-buster

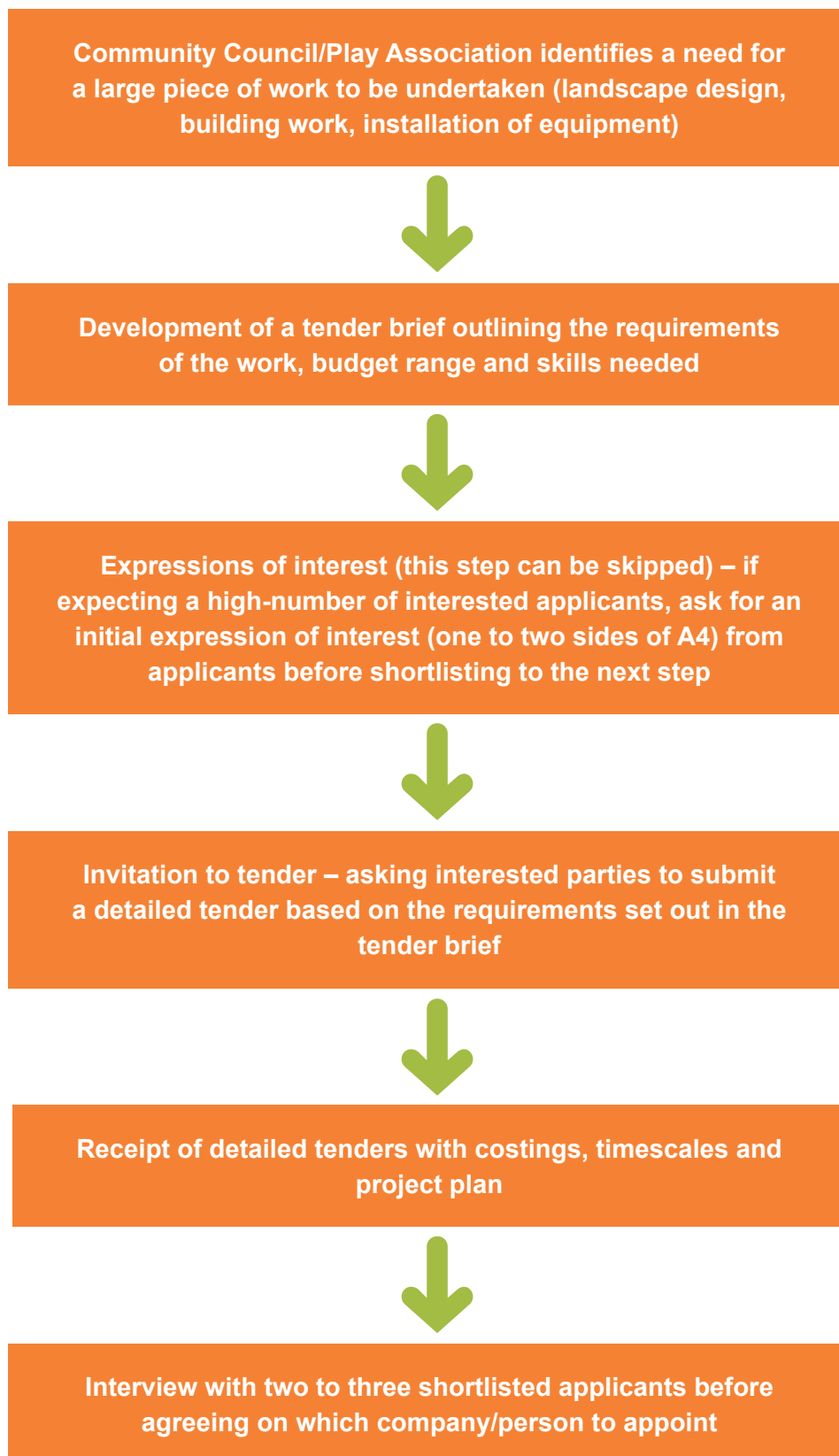
Rubber safety surfacing (wet pour) stops children from getting injured

Rubber safety surfacing is only one kind of Impact Absorbing Surface (IAS) which is often expensive, requiring specialist equipment to lay. Other valid forms of IAS include grass and loose-fill materials such as sand and bark. These surfaces require a more structured inspection and maintenance regime but also provide additional play value.

For more information about IAS visit [RoSPA's website](#)

Section 9: Procurement – the tendering process

Procurement refers to the process of acquiring goods or services. When developing a play space, we need to ensure that we are getting the best value from manufacturers, contractors and designers and that their skills and approach meet the needs of our organisation and community. This process is called the tender process and is outlined below:





This section provides practical tools for developing a tender brief, which can be used to advertise for work to be undertaken on the play space, how to set up a scoring system and deciding on who to employ to undertake the work.

On the next pages there are fictional tender briefs that can be used to help format a tender brief for our own project. One is aimed at the design stage and the other at the development stage.

Procurement policies

It should be noted that some large organisations, such as local authority departments, have a procurement policy, which states how to conduct the tender process, including format of design briefs and minimum costing to require tendering (thresholds).

Procurement thresholds set out by the Welsh Government are available on their website and public sector bodies (such as local authorities) need to advertise their tender opportunities on the [Sell2Wales](#) website if the project exceeds the threshold.

Scoring potential candidates

Once two or three possible candidates have been identified, we will want to arrange to discuss their proposals in more detail. Ensure there are two or three members on the panel to compare notes.

Before the meeting decide what criteria are the most important to reach a decision. These could be: value for money, track record, environmental awareness, experience of accessible play spaces or knowledge of the local community.

On [page 42](#) there is a sample template that can be used to help with the scoring process. Note that there is a column to 'weight' each criteria in terms of how much it matters to our final decision. For example, whilst pricing is important we might decide that an organisation's understanding of what constitutes a quality play space matters more and should therefore have greater influence on who we decide to go with. Taken together the weighting of all the criteria should add up to 100% (representing all the information we will use to make our decision).

Kingsbeard Community Play Association

Design Tender – Expression of Interest

Kingsbeard Community Play Association in partnership with Nant y Môr Community Council have received funding from the Lottery to re-develop the play space on Kingsbeard estate which is in serious need of refurbishment.

Extensive consultation with the community, supported by the County Play Officer, has shown a need for a play space that can be used by the wide age-range of children who live in the area (from toddlers to teenagers). Parents and teenagers are particularly keen that any developments provide social space for sitting and chatting and spaces where different age groups can socialise together.

Kingsbeard Community Play Association is also keen that any designs for the play space incorporate natural elements and are designed to fit in with the area's rich heritage.

Accessibility is of great importance to us and to our community. We want to ensure that as many of the opportunities as possible in our play space can be accessed by children with a range of abilities.

We are inviting expressions of interest from landscape architects and play space designers.

At this stage we require up to two sides of A4 describing your approach to developing natural play settings, your experience in this field (with examples and photos if possible), your understanding of what a play setting aims to achieve and some sense of your scale of charges.

Please specify if you have any experience in bringing designs to reality and understand the context of planning permissions, land searches and surveys.

Kingsbeard Community Play Association and its partners will decide whether to pursue any expressions of interest to the next stage.

Expressions of interest should be sent by 6 February to:

*Chairperson
Kingsbeard Community Play Association
Nant y Môr
Ynys Môn
LLXX XNN*

For more information please contact:

chair@kingsbeardplay.org
07777 654321

Kingsbeard Community Play Association

Development Tender – Expression of Interest

Kingsbeard Community Play Association in partnership with Nant y Môr Community Council have received funding from the Lottery to re-develop the play space on Kingsbeard estate which is in serious need of refurbishment.

Extensive consultation with the community, supported by the County Play Officer, has shown a need for a play space that can be used by the wide age-range of children who live in the area from toddlers to teenagers.

Working with a local firm of landscape architects, we now have a series of drawings showing our plans for the area.

We are seeking a landscaping company with the necessary links in the play industry to incorporate the elements of purpose-built play equipment alongside the natural space we desire.

We are inviting detailed tender briefs from landscapers, building contractors and specialist play builders.

Our budget for this project is £75,000. Please provide detailed costing breakdowns, timescales and evidence of similar completed work.

If you are interested in working with Kingsbeard to bring this exciting project to reality, please contact us at the address below to receive copies of our drawings and for an informal discussion.

Completed tenders should be sent by 6 February to:

*Chairperson
Kingsbeard Community Play Association
Nant y Môr
Ynys Môn
LLXX XNN*

For more information please contact:

chair@kingsbeardplay.org
07777 654321

Scoring sheet – expressions of interest

Organisation		
Approach to developing natural play spaces		Weighting 30%
Experience in field (examples and photos)		20%
Understanding of what a play setting aims to achieve		30%
Scale of charges		20%
Total weighting		

Section 10: Funding



To develop or refurbish a play space it is necessary to identify adequate funding for the project. This section provides some considerations when identifying funding. For further advice and guidance on fundraising or for an overview of local and national funding sources contact your County Voluntary Council (see Who to contact for further information on [page 58](#)).

Fundraising

There are a number of ways to raise funds:

Grant funding – If we have little experience of completing funding applications refer to Who to contact for further information on [page 58](#) for contacts who may be able to assist. Grants

require completing an application process which can take between a few weeks to several months to receive a decision depending on the size of the grant. Upon successfully being awarded a grant it will be necessary to complete a report to the funder to explain how the money has been used and account for expenditure.

Charity fundraising – Some local play associations have become registered charities to raise funds through charitable means. For advice regarding charity status talk to your County Voluntary Council.

Community council funding – Community councils can allocate money towards community

projects including play space projects. However, it is unlikely they will pay for a whole development. Consider how regular contributions can help with ongoing maintenance.

Community events/fundraising – There may be other community groups who are willing to help fundraise through running cake stalls, fetes, bingo nights or any one of a huge range of fundraising activities. These may only bring in small amounts of funding at a time, but they accumulate and also ensure community involvement.

Slow development

Developing a new play space or refurbishing an existing one can be a very expensive process. If seeking all the funding in one go, it can be a long time before anything is developed – while the space is sitting empty and unused.

By following the design process recommended in this toolkit, we will have a good indication of how the play space will look upon completion. Look at which elements need to be completed and in which order, then develop them as and when funding is secured. It can be much easier to secure several smaller grants or raise a certain amount each year, than to apply and depend on one large grant application.

By developing a space over a period of time, as and when funding is available, means we can see how new developments are being received and make appropriate changes to plans that respond to the needs of the community.

Running costs, maintenance and inspection

Unless another organisation is taking responsibility for running costs, maintenance and inspection we need to ensure fundraising plans include annual costs. These will include: insurance, grass cutting, annual inspections, general maintenance and removing or replacing worn out equipment.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

VAT will be added to work undertaken on the play space as well as to equipment being purchased. This can be a significant additional cost that is not always taken into account when receiving quotes. Cost this into funding plans unless there are ways of minimising it.



Section 11: Risk management



As part of responsibilities relating to inspection and maintenance of the play space, it is necessary to conduct regular operational risk assessments. It is likely this will be a condition of the insurance.

There are numerous formats for risk assessments that can be used, which can be confusing. The primary purpose of a risk assessment is to show we have identified any potential hazards and their associated risks and put control measures in place to manage those risks. If we have a format we are already familiar with we can adapt elements of it.

Risk-benefit assessment

Risk-benefit assessment is an approach to risk assessment particularly suited to those situations where there are benefits in allowing a degree of risk to remain. This is now widely acknowledged as an appropriate approach to managing risk in children's play provision as endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

This approach enables providers to evidence their reasoning when making decisions that seek to balance the benefits of children experiencing uncertainty and challenge in their play with our duty as providers to protect children from unreasonably high risks of serious harm. This process may result in the identification of control measures that reduce the risk of serious injury whilst still allowing some risk to remain.

Including expert advice

In essence *'risk-benefit assessment is a tool for improving decision-making in any context where a balance has to be struck between risks and benefits'*. The point of the process is to come to an informed and reasoned judgement. Importantly, this process might include the input of expert advice. There are situations such as those requiring detailed technical understanding that are beyond the competence of many of us. For example, what is the appropriate timber for building

and the implications of any industry standards. Such experts are able to offer helpful advice and guidance but the final decision, and responsibility in law, about balancing risks and benefits rests with the provider.

Narrative rather than numbers

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide advocates for a descriptive or narrative approach to risk-benefit assessment, which does not feature numerical calculations and values assigned to risks and benefits. It makes no sense to try and score a sprained ankle against the thrill of climbing a tree or to grade the pleasure of playing in sand against the risk of injury from litter.

A descriptive approach provides for a much more balanced and reasoned discussion of benefits and risks, whilst also fulfilling our legal duty as providers to carry out a 'suitable and sufficient assessment' of the risks presented by the play space. These risk-benefit assessments may cover the whole play space and/or focus on particular features within it.

Considerations

Below we have included a generic set of questions taken from *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide* that could make up the basis of a risk-benefit assessment. The aim is to evidence reasonable and practicable judgement and as such you should consider including sources to the information you have used to form your judgements. A risk-benefit assessment might prompt you to consider:

- What are the benefits for children and for others? They might include the range of benefits that play has on children's well-being and development, benefits to the local community, benefits from reduced costs, and/or benefits from a reduction in undesirable hazards.
- What are the risks? These might include the risk of harm and injury to children, risk of complaints or litigation, risk of environmental damage, and financial risks.
- What views are there on the nature of the risk and how authoritative are they? These could include technical specialists, guidance from accident prevention organisations, and authoritative publications from national play organisations.
- What relevant local factors need to be considered? This could include the characteristics of the local environment and the likely users.
- What are the options for managing the risk, and what are the pros, cons and costs of each? Options should be evaluated and any new information discussed. Possibilities include increasing the opportunities that led to the assessment, reducing or removing the risk, doing nothing, and monitoring the situation.
- What precedents and comparisons are there? These could be from comparable services or spaces as well as from other providers.
- What is the risk-benefit judgement? These are dependent on the policies and objectives of the provider as well as local circumstances. Judgements should be monitored and periodically reviewed.
- How should the judgement be implemented in the light of local political concerns, cultural attitudes and beliefs? This could include taking account of the views of local parents and other adults, of local providers, and considering local traditions.

Play and risk information sheet

This information sheet written by Tim Gill and produced by Play Wales explains why a balanced, thoughtful approach to managing risks in children's play is needed.

[Download](#)

A draft risk management policy

Before completing specific risk-benefit assessments it is vital that we have a '*philosophy, a rationale, or agreed purpose, and to state what it is*'. Decisions need to be made against a policy background that makes clear the values and principles on which we base our decisions about risk, and why risk is an essential component in children's play.

On the next page there is a fictional risk management policy that can be adapted for our own use. The policy sets out the risk-benefit approach to managing risks and allows us to input our own procedures, frequency of inspections and routine maintenance programme for example. This policy is based on the *Conwy & Wrexham Risk Management Framework: Policy, Routine and Dynamic Risk-Benefit Assessment*.

Risk management systems

Risk management in this policy is used to refer to all elements involved in the management of risk that can, and should, incorporate much more than paper risk assessments alone. Where all these elements are appropriately supported there is potential to develop more robust and better-informed risk management systems.

Providing for risk and challenge in play provision

Kingsbeard Community Play Association recognises that childhood is full of new experiences, which necessarily involve some degree of risk taking, whether it be physical or emotional. Childhood is a continuous process of trial and error with the potential for achievement, but also the inevitability of accidents. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving risk of injury.

We have a duty of care to try and protect individuals accessing our services and facilities from the potentially, long-term, damaging effects

of being exposed to serious and unreasonable physical and emotional harm. However, in doing this we must not overlook, or seek it at the expense of, also enabling children to actively participate in their own personal development of health, well-being and resilience, as a result of engaging in situations with uncertain outcomes.

Risk-benefit assessment

Decisions about what is reasonable and the desirability of children engaging with hazards will be made using a risk-benefit approach. This process involves considering the potential benefits afforded by an opportunity alongside any potentially negative outcomes and then making a judgement about whether the potential for injury is proportional to the benefits. That is, do the potential benefits justify allowing risk of injury to remain?

For the purpose of risk-benefit assessments, benefits can be physical, emotional, social or environmental (and are likely to be a combination of all of these). Risk of injury can be identified by considering the likelihood of any potential injury occurring together with the potential severity of that injury.

Reasonable controls

During the risk-benefit process it may be necessary to identify control measures to reduce risk of injury to an acceptable level. However, the control measures that can reasonably be implemented will depend on the resources available. The cost of any potential control measures must be justified by being proportional to the risk of injury involved.

Prior to the implementation of control measures, consideration should also be given to any potentially negative impacts that may result from making that intervention. For example, it is important that children's need to use their environment in novel and unexpected ways is not constrained in the search for providing absolute protection from injury.

Site checks and technical inspections

On unstaffed play sites intermittent checks can be made to identify and manage hazards. However, the frequency of these checks will depend on what

can reasonably be achieved given the resources available, the type of facility and its location.

Kingsbeard Community Play Association Risk Management Policy

This policy has been developed to provide a coherent, consistent and balanced approach to the management of risk on Kingsbeard Community Play Association Play Space to ensure greater clarity of understanding around this issue.

In doing so, the policy aims to present some challenge to the existing risk averse nature of our society which can limit children's play experiences.

The policy is supported by the following statement issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in 2012:

'Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.'



The table below shows the agreed frequency for routine and technical inspections.

Type of check	Frequency	Notes
Annual technical inspection	Yearly	Conducted by Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) inspector
Routine inspection	Quarterly	Thorough check of all mechanical parts, signs of corrosion/rotting and testing all equipment. Ensure risk-benefit assessments for the site takes into account findings from routine and annual inspections
Routine inspection	Weekly	Checking for signs of deliberate misuse, vandalism or damaged equipment or features. Any issues recorded and appropriate actions taken to remedy them
Routine maintenance	Weekly	Litter pick, rake sand, check for dangerous objects
Mow grass	Monthly during growing season	Leave area nearest trees to grow wild

Summary

- There is intrinsic value in children experiencing uncertainty and personal challenge through their play.
- Children need to feel free to experience risk and challenge of their own choice. They will only be able to do this if we allow some degree of uncertainty to remain.
- The play provision we create aims to support children to experience reasonable levels of risk for themselves.
- There is a need for balance between ensuring appropriate levels of protection and preserving reasonable levels of uncertainty.
- We aim to manage risk so that whenever reasonably possible the risk of injury children are exposed to is proportional to the potential benefits associated with the situation.
- Controls will be reasonable and realistic whilst ensuring unnecessary risks are minimised.
- Risk management incorporates a number of different elements which work together to form a continuous cycle, improving our practice.
- Children are capable of managing some risk for themselves and their competency will develop as their experience grows.

Section 12: Risk-benefit assessment tool



The Play Safety Forum has produced a practical tool that tackles risk-averse culture and makes a positive case for risk, adventure and challenge as vital ingredients in children's play. The initiative is supported by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the UK Government.

The Play Safety Forum's [Risk-Benefit Assessment Form](#) is an easy-to-use tool to support play providers to balance the benefits of an activity with any inherent risk, taking into account the risks while recognising the benefits to children and young people of challenging play experiences.

This form is designed to support a balanced approach to risk management using the process of risk-benefit assessment (RBA).

It is aimed at those involved in providing play opportunities in a range of contexts, including play areas, public parks, green spaces, out-of-school childcare settings, playwork settings, schools and early years services.

It builds on the guidance document [Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide](#), published by the Play Safety Forum with Play England, Play Wales, Play Scotland and PlayBoard Northern Ireland.



Those using the Risk-Benefit Assessment Form should focus on the significant risks that the play provision gives rise to. The HSE defines significant risks as those that go beyond everyday life and that *'are capable of creating a real risk to health and safety which any reasonable person would appreciate and would take steps to guard against'*.

Section 13: Insurance



Even with excellent risk management processes in place, sometimes accidents can and do happen. In the event that an accident takes place and we are in a position where compensation has to be paid, adequate insurance is critical.

Selecting which company will provide insurance will be a very local decision and we may already have a good relationship with an existing insurance company or the insurance may be dealt with as part of a blanket policy that covers other facilities within the community.

It is important to share the risk management policy with the insurers to ensure they are fully aware of the risk-benefit approach being taken and the measures put in place to manage risks.

Due to the amount of choice that is available, it may be useful to speak with other groups that manage play areas to find out about their experiences with particular companies. The County Play Officer will be able to provide contact details for other groups if necessary. (See Who to contact for further information on [page 58](#)).

Myth-buster

If we purchase our equipment from a play equipment manufacturer we don't need to conduct a risk-benefit assessment

A risk-benefit assessment is a key part of an ongoing risk-management process and will need to be conducted at regular intervals. It is necessary to risk assess both the state of any fixed equipment as well as access and entry points and natural features on the site.

Section 14: Signage



There is a legal requirement, under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957, 1984 to ensure that designated play areas have correct and adequate signage.

Signage can play an important role in providing information to users for the purposes of reporting accidents and damage.

Signage contents

Play area signage should include:

- Name of operator of the site.
- Contact details to report damage or accidents. Where the operator has a permanent office the details should include the telephone number. Where a clerk works from home including a telephone number may not be appropriate.
- Location of nearest public telephone for contacting emergency services (not essential).
- Pictogram 'No Dogs' signs are also strongly recommended.
- Where there are overhead electric cables nearby 'No Kite Flying' signs are recommended.

- Where a play area is near a road the use of road signs to warn motorists of the presence of a playground should be considered (contact the local Highways Authority for provision of these).

Signage should also be welcoming and child-friendly. If possible work with local children to help design signage that reflects the community and the children who live there.

Note that many funders are very happy to see their logos appearing on signs as acknowledgement.

Myth-buster

Graffiti is a sign of vandalism

Graffiti can actually be a sign of ownership of a space and it is a part of teenage culture. Wheeled play areas in particular often get graffiti as will other play equipment used by teenagers. Accept this as a sign of a successful play space. Graffiti walls don't tend to work in the long term because young people want to tag items that are important to them (for example swings, ramps, shelters) not a static wall.

Section 15: Maintenance and inspection



This section looks at what responsibility we need to take for the play space regarding ongoing maintenance and inspection. If we are managing this ourselves we need to understand the processes involved.

It may be that we have made an agreement with the Community Council or the local authority regarding maintenance and inspection. If this is the case, refer to Section 4 – Forming partnerships on [page 24](#) where a Memorandum of Understanding template that can be adapted to meet our needs is provided.

Post-installation inspections – These are usually made a condition of a contract with the supplier or installer to ensure the play space is fit for use before handover. The inspection ensures that all equipment has been correctly installed and makes recommendations on compliance with standards. As with annual inspections, these need

to be conducted by a professionally competent independent playground inspector.

Annual inspections – Whilst it is not compulsory to have an annual inspection of your play space, HSE and RoSPA strongly recommend them. It may also be a requirement of the insurance company and may compromise our position in the case of a compensation claim resulting from an accident.

Arrange an annual inspection through a professionally competent independent playground inspector. [The Register of Playground Inspectors International \(RPII\)](#) maintains a list of qualified inspectors.

[RoSPA](#) can also advise on inspections and may be able to save us money by arranging a ‘in-sequence inspection’ which will be at a specific time of the year when their inspectors are covering the local area.

Routine (operational) inspections – These should take place every three months and are intended to ensure we are checking issues identified by the annual inspection. It is sensible to use the annual inspection report as a guide for how to conduct operational inspections. It will involve a thorough check of all mechanical parts, signs of corrosion/rotting and testing all equipment.

Training is available in how to properly conduct routine inspections. For advice contact the County Play Officer or RoSPA. (See Who to contact for further information on [page 58](#)).

Daily/weekly maintenance checks – These are regular daily or weekly checks which should be quick and easy to undertake. Checking for signs of deliberate misuse, vandalism and removing litter or dangerous items. How often these are carried out will depend on the level of use. On [page 55](#) there is a tool that can be used to record these routine checks.

Maintenance considerations – A regular programme of routine inspections and maintenance will be required for the play space, either covered by the organisation or contracted out. How this is arranged will depend on the local situation. Below are some factors to take into account in relation to maintenance.

- Can we identify a local organisation that can take responsibility for maintenance?
- What general maintenance will be required? Litter picking, mowing, general repairs can all be undertaken by the local community.
- What specialist maintenance will be required? Replacement of worn out parts on play equipment is best left to a specialist.
- How much are the maintenance plans going to cost? Once the budget has been allocated we will need to build this into our fundraising activities.



Myth-buster

We should discourage other adults in play spaces

Play spaces are community spaces and should be shared. In addition, a 'playable' community garden for example may open up opportunities for alternate funding. Parents, carers and grandparents can benefit from a shared social space where they can meet other adults and children can play. A communal shared community play space with the presence of adults better meets children's play needs as there are people on hand to assist if someone is hurt or if bullying or anti-social behaviour is an issue.

Routine play space checks

Date	Problems/what has been done	Score (See Key)	Initials/ signed	Future actions
	For example: Picked up litter, removed broken glass, checked damaged swing seat	For example: 4		For example: Recommend move to daily checks over the summer. Add damaged swing seat to routine inspection checklist.

Key (scoring) Allocate a number of 1-5 to represent the level of damage/maintenance required at each visit.

1 = little or no litter, no damage

2 = some litter, signs of regular use and wear

3 = Moderate litter/some removal of dangerous objects

4 = Significant litter and/or damage

5 = Signs of very heavy use/lots of litter/dangerous objects to remove/significant regular maintenance needed

NB – As a guide if the site usually scores 1 or 2 they may only require weekly checks, if it's 4 or 5, daily checks may be needed. We can use this tool to monitor levels of maintenance needed and also seasonal changes.

Section 16: Planning spaces for play



This section looks at the standards and guidance that exist nationally and locally in relation to what space should be made available for play in a given community, town or village against demographic factors such as, population, number of dwellings and size of area. It is intended to help navigate some of the jargon that is used in planning policy.

Planning Policy Wales

The 10th edition of *Planning Policy Wales* was published in December 2018. It sets out the Welsh Government's policies on land use. From 2005 local authorities have been required to develop Local Development Plans (LDP's). Development plans are intended to provide a basis for rational and consistent decisions on planning applications and appeals at a local authority level. The LDP system aims to reduce the amount of time spent on plan preparation by engaging with relevant interest groups at an early stage and ensuring they remain involved throughout the process.

Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play

Fields in Trust (FIT), provides advice and guidance relating to planning and planning policy that affect the provision and protection of space for outdoor play and recreation. Their 'Six-Acre Standard' has been used as a benchmark for planning play and recreational space since the 1930s.

Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard, is the latest version of FIT's guidance that covers the whole of the UK – there is a specific supplement that covers the slightly different policy context here in Wales.

FIT recommends benchmark guidelines for the provision of different types of formal and informal public open space based on hectares per 1000 population, as well as accessibility guidelines based on walking distances and times. FIT also categorises designated play space into three different sizes and types and makes recommendations as to the range of play areas provided by the number of dwellings:

Scale of development	Local Area for Play (LAP)	Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)
5 - 10 dwellings	X		
10 - 200 dwellings	X	X	
201 - 500 dwellings	X	X	
500+ dwellings	X	X	X

Further information can be read on [FIT's website](#)

Section 106 Agreements

Section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 enables a planning obligation to be entered into by agreement between a developer and the local planning authority. Very often the provision of a playground on sites proposed for new housing developments is such a planning obligation. This presents an opportunity for funding to be made available for the development of play areas where new residential housing is being built.

Technical Advice Note 16 (TAN 16) – Open Space Assessments

As stated above, *Planning Policy Wales* provides the strategic policy framework for Local Development Plans. This is then supplemented by a series of topic based Technical Advice Notes (TANs).

TAN 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space states:

'While formal, equipped play areas provide opportunities, particularly for young children within communities, these are not the only forms

of provision which should be offered. Wheeled play areas, ball game areas, "playable space", community woodland and informal areas for "environmental play" can provide opportunities for children to interact and gain the social, health and well-being benefits which come from opportunities for active physical play.'

As part of TAN 16, local authorities are required to conduct 'Open Space Assessments'. These assessments offer the opportunity to identify the quantity and quality of open space in an area. The key stages for open space assessments as summarised in TAN 16 are:

- Identify local needs
- Audit provision
- Set standards of provision
- Apply standards of provision
- Draft development plan policies.

Furthermore, TAN 16 states that local authorities may choose to use the FIT Cymru benchmarks but that they may also develop standards that more closely fit the local circumstances.

Who to contact for further information

Contact	Support	Details
Local authority Play Officer or Play Service	Funding, risk management, playwork provision	www.wlga.wales/welsh-local-authority-links
Local Family Information Services	Participation, funding, activities, childcare, information for families	www.gov.wales/find-your-local-family-information-service
County Voluntary Council	Funding, support for voluntary organisations	www.childreninwales.org.uk/in-your-area/county-voluntary-councils/
Local authority Planning and Environment	Information on planning process	www.wlga.wales/welsh-local-authority-links
Local authority Environmental Health	Dog fouling	www.wlga.wales/welsh-local-authority-links
RPII – Register of Playground Inspectors International	Find a playground inspector	www.playinspectors.com
RoSPA – Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	Online briefings, training and advice	www.rospace.com
Local authority Parks Department	Information on parks and open spaces	www.wlga.wales/welsh-local-authority-links
One Voice Wales	Support and representation for town and community councils	www.onevoicewales.org.uk
Third Sector Support Wales	Sustainable funding advice	www.thirdsectorsupport.wales/sustainable-funding/
Play Wales	Design advice, risk management and information regarding regional play associations	www.playwales.org.uk
Playful Childhoods website	Advice and ideas for supporting play in local communities	www.playfulchildhoods.wales/about-playful-communities

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