



OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Developing Accessible Play Space

A Good Practice Guide



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Ministerial foreword

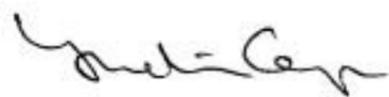
Everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy our parks and open spaces but for too many people this is simply not possible. This good practice guide on developing accessible play space is an important step forward in tackling this unfairness.

It will help play space providers to understand the issues that disabled children and their families face when using play spaces and provides good practice examples of how to improve existing space as well as issues to consider when creating new ones. The guide will also be useful for families of disabled children when they are working with play space providers.

We have long recognised that good quality parks and green spaces in urban areas enhance people's quality of life.

High quality, well-used parks bring people together and lead to more inclusive communities. So we need to make sure that as many parks and open spaces as possible are welcoming to people regardless of who they are or where they live.

I am pleased to endorse this good practice guide and feel confident that it will improve people's quality of life, and especially the lives of disabled children.



Yvette Cooper
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
at ODPM

Summary

Outdoor play has developmental and therapeutic benefits for all children. It is fun, helps to keep children healthy, develop an awareness of risk and danger and is important for building social, emotional and life skills. In the past there has been little recognition that disabled children are entitled to the same play opportunities as other children. As a result their interests have not been fully considered when planning and designing public play spaces. The need for guidance was highlighted in the report 'Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener'. Enabling disabled children to access play spaces helps them and their families build relationships and neighbourhood networks that can bind communities and promote social inclusion.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister commissioned Inclusion, Childhood and Education Ltd to produce a good practice guide. Based on consultation with disabled children, young people, their parents and caregivers, campaigners, playground amenities officers, equipment manufacturers, planners, play providers, and policy makers the guide aims to help all those with an interest in developing accessible play space. The good practice guide gives advice which can be tailored to individual settings on developing accessible play space disabled children can use.

Key points are summarised here.

Understanding the issues

All children do not need to access play spaces in the same way but they are all fundamentally entitled to go out to play. Good design of public play spaces is needed in order to make this possible. Each child is different – not every piece of equipment in a play space needs to be accessible to every child but access to the social experience of play is key.

The key recommendation of the guide is that developers should concentrate on making the environment fit the child. There is no need to focus on impairment specific issues – rather identify the obstacles to play for any child who might wish to access the play space and think about ways to circumvent them.

Environmental barriers that exclude children with impairments, such as uneven surfaces and narrow gates, can easily be changed and are not necessarily expensive. Social barriers such as fear, embarrassment or discriminatory attitudes also need to be tackled so that an accessible play space is also an inclusive one in which disabled children and their families feel welcome. The essential ingredient for making play space accessible is a willingness to seek out and remove disabling barriers.

When children play together, parents invariably talk together and new community alliances are forged. Inclusive play spaces can be the seedbeds from which sustainable and inclusive communities grow.

The good practice guide provides examples of how careful attention to design can help to ensure that play spaces are inclusive, comfortable and appealing to disabled children and their families.

Getting started

Whether you are an individual, group, voluntary or statutory agency working to develop inclusive play space, carrying out a review of facilities and looking for people to involve is an ideal starting point.

The issues to review fall into two broad categories (i) social issues and (ii) technical and physical factors. Reviewing **social issues** involves thinking about how to create opportunities for disabled and non-disabled children to play together. A focus on **technical and physical characteristics** involves considering such issues as safety and maintenance, car parking, shelter and toilets.

Consultation

The key users of play spaces are children and so the perspectives of disabled children and their non-disabled peers are key to the development of good quality accessible play space. The best way to ascertain what to put in a play space is by working with disabled children to find out what they want.

First steps towards consultation can be initiated by anyone. It is important to realise that disabled children, young

people and their families can do the consulting as well as be consulted.

Creative thinking is required to maximise consultation with disabled children and their families. Consultation methods that do not take up much hard-pressed family time will be appreciated. The development of on-going consultation strategies increases the engagement of disabled children and their families. The good practice guide suggests innovative consultation strategies.

Inclusion by design

Envisaging accessible play spaces as places where all children can have the chance to interact and play with each other should be the starting point when thinking through what is involved in creating inclusion by design.

Equipment does not wholly define a play space and developing accessible play space isn't just about getting the right fixed equipment. How the design of the space enables people to use it in different ways is important. Use of **natural resources** can greatly enhance the quality of the play experience for disabled children. **Equipment** plays an important role in play spaces but children also want to do things other than use equipment.

Taking risk is an integral part of play and risk cannot be eliminated from accessible play space for any child, including disabled and vulnerable children. Parents of disabled children frequently say they would rather their children encounter acceptable risk in

play than be excluded. A balance has to be found between accepting that all children face a degree of risk in open and inclusive public play spaces and the pressures of the increasingly litigious climate in which we live.

Manufacturers are vigilant about equipment design and installation and pay close attention to compliance with safety standards. Some are producing their own guidance on accessible play space which attempt to deal with the diverse requirements of different bodies (such as **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, National Playing Fields Association**, and the **Health and Safety Executive**) and examine duties of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) – these publications provide a useful point of reference and are signposted in the good practice guide.

Moving forward

The good practice guidance sets out a framework for developing accessible play space which covers

- **making connections**
- **setting a policy context**
- **establishing responsibility for play**
- **promoting partnership working**
- **involving the community**

Funding is an important issue and making play spaces accessible does not have to cost the earth. Funding for developing accessible play space will be far easier to come by, and can be most effectively used, when good connections are made between

different groups. The good practice guide gives advice on this by demonstrating how to build up an infrastructure of collaborators and ways to seek guidance on securing funding.

Practical pointers

Practical examples cited in the guide cover existing good practice in consultation with disabled children and their families, partnership working with key groups, utilising community expertise and developing an inclusive approach to design. **Thinking Points** and **Checklists** are suggested to encourage development and discussion.

Examples of how the **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)** relates to practice are also highlighted.

Contacts and further information given on

- **relevant policy**
- **how to consult and engage with disabled children and their families**
- **general issues related to inclusive play**
- **information on technical, health and safety aspects**
- **design issues**

How to use this guide

The guide is the product of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including disabled children, young people, their parents and caregivers, campaigners, playground amenities officers, equipment manufacturers, planners, play providers, policy makers and many others who have shared their expertise in order to make it as practically-based and user-friendly as possible. It gives advice which can be tailored to individual settings on developing accessible play space that disabled children can use.



The guide includes **practical examples** from the work and experience of all of the above-mentioned groups to help illustrate how commonly identified problems can be overcome, often with relative ease and little cost. Examples are based on existing good practice in consultation with disabled children and their families, partnership working with key groups, utilising community expertise and developing an inclusive approach to design.

The guide is organised according to the processes involved in developing accessible play spaces, though in reality those processes will differ from setting to setting. It is split into two sections. In the first section **Chapter 1 Understanding the Issues** establishes the importance of questioning

assumptions around disability. **Chapter 2 Getting Started** then suggests ways of beginning the process of ensuring that disabled children can access play spaces. In **Chapter 3** ideas for **Consulting and Engaging with Disabled Children and their Families** are presented. **Chapter 4 Inclusion by Design** explores the detail of accessible play space design covering issues relating to environment and equipment. **Section Two** is intended as a 'spring board' from which individuals or groups can take ideas to help them develop accessible play space. **Chapter 5 Moving Forward** suggests actions to encourage joined up working which will make the development of play spaces accessible to disabled children a reality. The final chapter **Resources, Contacts and Information** collates helpful references and contacts referred to throughout the guide and provides a glossary of key terms.



There is something of importance to all stakeholders in each section of the guide. We have used the ordinary things that people have said to us to illustrate key points, inserted photographs to clarify meaning. **Thinking Points** are suggested to encourage development and discussion. Occasional examples of how the Disability Discrimination Act relates to practice are also highlighted.

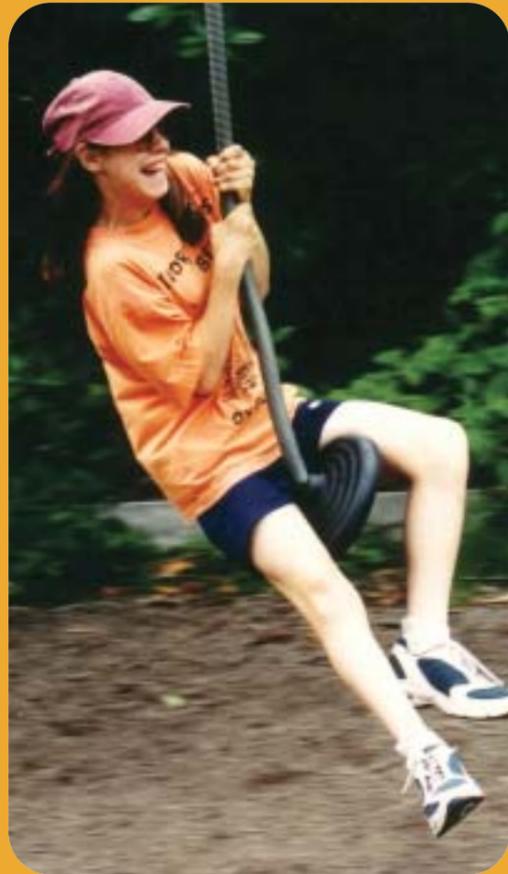


Section 1

What this section covers

- Introduction to why a guide is needed
- Issues relating to disability, impairment and play
- Information about how to get started in developing accessible play space
- Strategies for consultation with disabled children and their families
- Design issues, including use of equipment, the natural environment and safety issues
- DDA implications

The purpose of this section of the guide is to provide an overview of the issues which are important to consider when developing accessible play space and discuss what works well in relation to getting projects established.



Chapter 1

Understanding the issues

What this chapter covers

- Why we need a guide
- Understanding disability and impairment
- The importance of play
- The impact of sustainable and inclusive communities

Why we need a guide

Where children play in their local communities, and how they can be supported to play safely in public spaces, is of concern to children and young people as well as to Government and parents. Improving access to public play spaces for disabled children and other groups who currently under use them is central to the development of sustainable and inclusive communities (ODPM, 2003¹).

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that disabled children have the right to be included in their local community and to do the kinds of things that non-disabled children do. They have the right to take part in play and leisure activities, the equal right to access cultural, artistic and leisure opportunities and the right to support to help them do this (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 23(1), (3); Article 31; Children Act 1989, Schedule 2, Paragraph 6 and 8).

Until recently, there has been little recognition of disabled children's entitlement to the same opportunities for development through play as other children. Consequently, insufficient attention has been paid to their interests when planning and designing public

play spaces. Since 1996, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has made it unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably and increasingly 'reasonable adjustments' are being required. This will help in the drive to make play spaces fully accessible (see Chapter 5 for more information).

Developing accessible play space is about enabling all children to be with and learn from each other. Moreover, enabling disabled children to access play spaces helps them and their families build relationships and neighbourhood networks that can bind communities and promote social inclusion.



Understanding disability and impairment

Many different terms are used when people talk about disabled children. In this guide we use the terms: 'impairment' and 'disability' to mean quite different things. The child, quoted below, describes the difference between these terms which sums up an approach often called 'the social model of disability' (Oliver, 1996).

"It is not our impairments – which are what we have – that make us disabled children. For me, my impairment will always be with me and is a part of me and I can live with that. It is society which makes me disabled by not letting me join in. Playgrounds are sometimes impossible, there are steps down in to the sand pit and I can't get on the slide. Sometimes I get teased there. It's those things that stop me going out to play and give me disability not my impairment."
Claire (14)

"In my head I am not disabled. I have impairments but in my head I am the same as everyone else."
Blake (19)

Using a social model approach makes the task of developing accessible play space manageable and this is the reason we have drawn attention to it so early on in the guide.



Thinking points

How can disabled children and their families have an ordinary experience in play spaces?

What do these quotes suggest to you?

"I want to go out to play and make friends. I want to have fun and be happy."
Martin, aged 10

"I want to be able to play with my brother. It makes me feel sad when I can play on things, say climbing up and he can't. I like it when he can climb as well, maybe not so high but we are on the same things in the same playground and we can play together."
Steven, 12 year old brother of Martin

"Like any family, we want to be able to go to places together. Having disabled children shouldn't mean this can't happen."
Martin and Steven's mum

Understanding the issues

Thinking points

Change the focus from making the child fit the environment to making the environment fit the child.

Environmental barriers that exclude children with impairments, such as uneven surfaces and narrow gates, can easily be changed. Social barriers such as fear, embarrassment or discriminatory attitudes can also be tackled. An in-depth knowledge of specific impairments is not essential to the development of good accessible play space – the key requirement is a willingness to seek out and remove disabling barriers.

Removing environmental barriers helps make play spaces **accessible**, whilst social barriers have to be dealt with to make them **inclusive**. The most physically accessible play spaces are still disabling if children with impairments do not feel welcomed, included and accepted in them.

The importance of play

“Playing is smiling, laughing, running, turning, spinning, sitting, climbing, watching.” **Sam** (13)

It has long been established that outdoor play has developmental and therapeutic benefits for children. It is fun, helps to keep children healthy, helps develop an awareness of risk and danger and is important for building social, emotional and life skills. The more diverse the natural and physical surroundings in an outdoor play space, the greater the range of learning and developmental opportunities (Potter, 2001; CPC 2002).

Inclusive play, when disabled and non-disabled children play together, provides all participating children with opportunities to explore their personal capacities and to oppose the limits which the exclusion of disabled children places on social relationships (Dunn et al, 2003).

The detrimental effects, on any child's well-being and development, of being denied opportunities to play are well documented (e.g., Brown, 2003; Hughes, 2001). Little specific mention of disabled children is made in this work. For this group, the detrimental



Sustainable and inclusive communities

Children who are included have the best chance of becoming included as adults. Feeling included as a child through experiences acquired in your local community gives a sense of belonging and self worth which later influences attitudes towards participation and citizenship. Many disabled children go to schools away from their own neighbourhood and so using local play space may provide the only opportunity to develop friendships with other local children and therefore to build and foster community identity.

When children play together, parents invariably talk together and new community alliances are forged. Inclusive play spaces can be the seedbeds from which sustainable and inclusive communities grow.

effects are often acute. Many parents of disabled children report there is no accessible play space in their area and consequently their children never go out to play:

“We don't go down to our local playground, because the children can't play together there. We haven't been for seven years.”
Parent of 10 year old disabled child

Inclusive play is about providing social spaces for children to be together in the ways they choose. Disabled children often have non-disabled siblings and friends they want to play with and good practice means providing play spaces children can use together.

Understanding the issues

Thinking points

Frequently mentioned barriers to developing inclusive play space

“I don't know enough about all the different impairments and might do the wrong thing”

“Disabled children require specialist play equipment”

“Disabled children are a special group to cater for with complex needs”

“The difficulties of managing risk for disabled children are prohibitive – we're terrified they'll fall and we'll be sued”

“We have to prepare for the new DDA duties from October 2004, but we don't know where to start”

“Disabled children's parents are over protective”

Overcoming these barriers

There is no need to focus on impairment specific issues – rather identify the obstacles to play for any child who might wish to access the play space and think about ways to circumvent them.

Each child is different – not every piece of equipment needs to be accessible to every child – access to the social experience of play is key.

Disabled children are children first and foremost.

Risk is an integral part of any child's experience of play – campaign groups stress many parents would rather their children encountered risk than exclusion.

The DDA Code of Practice on Rights of Access to Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises provides guidance for service providers on how the duties under the Act might apply in practice. It recommends an inclusive approach and consultation with disabled people and those representing them.
[See pages 35 and 49 for more information]

View anxieties as barriers to overcome. Talking openly with disabled children and families about their fears and yours will help to find ways of managing concerns. Parents with disabled children want to be treated as ordinary parents. Remember, they are often parents of non-disabled children too.



Breaking barriers through play

Chapter 2

What this chapter covers

Getting started

- The importance of review
- Carrying out a review
- Questions to ask when carrying out a review



Who do you see in the play space?

The importance of review

Whether you are an individual, group, voluntary or statutory agency working to develop inclusive play space, carrying out a review of facilities and looking for people to involve is an ideal starting point. Focussing on what is already happening in play spaces and finding out whether or not disabled children are using them shows what current facilities are, what is needed to improve them, and how the two can be reconciled. The evidence base accumulated through a review helps to present a case for developing an action plan.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17) says that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreation facilities. Provision for children and young people is one of the PPG 17 typologies ('areas designed for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters'). To ease the burden local authorities might wish to review play areas as part of a wider audit of their open spaces.

A review need not be complex; it simply involves taking stock of local commitments, facilities and resources. It can be part of a routine user survey or site survey of an existing or proposed play space. In the first instance it is about seeing what is in place, identifying problems and issues and then making contact with those who may be able to help in their resolution.

Invariably the scale of initiatives will be different and reviews need to be tailored to reflect this. Whilst some local authorities will be working on a rolling programme of changes to a number of play spaces, small groups or individuals may seek to improve a small local play area, and developers and designers are typically working from scratch to develop new sites.

Getting started



Practical example 1

In **Brentwood, Essex**, a local authority worker presented councillors with **photographs** of all the playgrounds in the area. As the playgrounds were all in a state of disrepair and neglect, the photographic review convinced the committee that a new strategy was needed and a rolling programme of play space improvements was started.

In **Plymouth**, local authority workers adapted their existing technical audit for all the playgrounds under their remit by **consulting with children and young people** when they realised the social aspects of play were missing from their review procedures.

The campaign group **Contact-A-Family** carried out a **web-based survey** of leisure which gave disabled children and their families a chance to comment on outdoor play spaces.

As part of the consultation for this guide **Inclusion, Childhood and Education (ICE)** invited disabled children to keep **diaries** reviewing their visits to local play spaces and send these to local playground amenities officers.

Parents wanting play spaces improved in **Calderdale** started feeding information about playgrounds they visited with their children into their **Parent and Carers Forum**.

Carrying out a review

The issues to review fall into two broad categories (i) **social issues** and (ii) **technical and physical factors**. Reviewing social issues involves thinking about how to create opportunities for disabled and non-disabled children to play together. A focus on technical and physical characteristics involves considering such issues as safety and maintenance, car parking, shelter and toilets.

Social issues

Find out the extent of your potential customer base. Demographic information provides an indication of play space development needs. Actually knowing how many disabled children live in your area is key to getting started.

Having ascertained necessary background information, it is then useful to look at the opportunities for disabled children offered by the play space or spaces under review. This can be done by simply listening to parents and watching children play.

Identify people in the locality whose skills and expertise can be utilised to establish a project team at both strategic and everyday

working levels. Visits to sites of good practice will extend networks to support development.

Technical and physical aspects

The **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)**, the **National Playing Fields Association (NPFA)** and the **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** provide information and guidance on technical aspects of play space design and maintenance. For details please see the **Resources, Contacts and Information** chapter.

Routine technical surveys of play spaces can be easily extended to incorporate questions about access and inclusion. The checklist on page 21 provides an example of how this might be done.

A dirty and unpleasant environment presents particular dangers to children exploring the environment through touch, smell and taste. Because of this, efforts to keep a play space clean and well maintained will encourage use by disabled children and their families. Reviewing the extent to which this is successfully managed and working towards

the challenges of keeping play spaces clean is therefore an important factor in improving accessibility.



Practical example 2

In developing inclusive play services **Bolton MBC** started by approaching their **Town and Country Planning and Census Offices** to find out how many children and young people live in a given area, and to get an indication of how many have impairments. This advice is routinely available upon request.



Practical example 3

Yorkshire Play Forum

"We're just a group of local authority officers who share ideas. We have a meeting about every 6 months, we go to each other's authorities, have a walk about, see what they've got that's good and bad and so on. If any of us get to hear of anything that's really good we tell the others."

Getting started



Thinking points

What use can be made of these parents' observations?

"For my son, being part of a crowd in public gardens with a water feature that children of all ages run in and out of provides the ideal play space because he loves being there. He blends into the crowd. In other, more traditional play settings, he stands out like a sore thumb because there is little for him to do."

"In parks where seats are in the middle and not all around the edge I'm not the only parent near the equipment with my child so I don't feel so conspicuous helping her."

"Although that particular piece of equipment is too hard for him, his sister helps him and her friends join in and then they are all playing together without even thinking about it."

Parents can often highlight issues which professionals may not always have the experience to think about. Remember to use the expertise of parents.



Checklist

Questions to ask when carrying out a review (but don't think you have to know all the answers)

Location

Is the play space near to car parks with drop kerbs at crossing points of any roads? Are there parking bays adjacent to the play area? Could controlled vehicular access to the play area improve access? Are toilets and shelter nearby? Are there public transport connections?

General access issues

Are paths wide, clear and wheelchair accessible? Are slopes accessible? Are there any sudden changes of level on access paths? Are handrails needed? Are gates wide enough for wheelchairs? Do animal grids, stiles for example, block access? Are access routes well lit at appropriate times?

Potential Users

How many disabled children live in the neighbourhood? Are there schools disabled children go to in the area? Remember many disabled children and young people attend ordinary schools and nurseries, others will be members of traveller communities or visitors to the area.

Information and Signs

Are there notices about who to contact in an emergency? Notices about who is responsible for the play space and where to report faults? Are there signs to welcome disabled children and their families in relevant community languages and modalities? Size of lettering and contrast are important details to get right.

Installation and Upgrade dates

Could accessible features be added at next date?

Local Area for Play (LAP)

Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)

Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)

What accessible features can be added to each of these play space categories? Can the play space be made inclusive even when no equipment is used? Are there features encouraging social play? How can planting and natural features add play value and enhance access. Remember, different play spaces across LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs could

cater for different things and create a complete network of inclusive play spaces.

Equipment

Can equipment be used by children of all ages, including older children with impairments? Is there sufficient space between items of equipment for manoeuvring wheelchairs? Can lockers and wheelchair storage be made available? Would a risk assessment be needed?

Safety Surfaces

Is there sensory variation? Is the surface non-slip and wheelchair and buggy accessible? How could colours, textures and materials be used to both enable depth perception and minimise confusion? Is there impact absorbing surface around equipment and is it in good order and suitable for all children? Note: level non-reflective paving is the most effective for anyone who may be unsteady or easily disorientated.

Fencing

Are there easily accessible entrances and exits and do they provide clear views for watching parents? Does the number, type and position of gates improve access? Is the area animal free (with the exception of guide dogs)?

Seating Areas

Can seating be provided in quiet and calm areas as well as in the midst of the busiest parts of the play space?

Health and Safety

Are there toilets and changing facilities? Are there adequate litter bins and separate dog fouling bins well away from the play space? Is the play space well maintained and clean? Are children and families protected from traffic danger and fumes? Are lifting and handling issues well thought out? How often are inspections carried out?

European Standards BSEN 1176 and 1177

Bearing in mind that these standards are not enshrined in law but rather make recommendations about practice, how does the space accommodate them? See Glossary for details.

Chapter 3

Consulting and engaging disabled children and their families

What this chapter covers

- The benefits of consulting disabled children
- Consultation strategies to consider
- Thinking points on effective consultation

“Sometimes when you tell someone what it’s like being disabled they want to understand a bit too quickly, because they feel it will be embarrassing if you explain and they then have to say ‘what do you mean’? I don’t mind how many times people ask as long as they listen to the answers. You don’t have to get it right first time, but you do have to keep asking.”

Blake (19)

There is broad understanding that consultation with traditional stakeholder groups is important and ideas for achieving this are familiar. It can be more difficult to envisage strategies for optimising the contribution which children – particularly disabled children – can make to the consultation process. People often feel unclear about what is to be learned from consultation with disabled children – and doubt that it can positively affect practice. Fear of impairment, anxiety about causing offence and simply not knowing how to talk to disabled children – particularly those with learning difficulties or communication impairments are the reasons usually given for not consulting this group of users. Similarly, not knowing where to find disabled children and young people can

be a key barrier to their participation in consultation.

The aim of this chapter is to address some of the concerns outlined above providing examples of where good practice has emerged. The clearest message to emerge from our consultations is that the insider perspectives of disabled children are key to the development of good quality accessible play space.



Consulting and engaging disabled children and their families

The benefits of consulting disabled children

It is widely acknowledged that consulting effectively with users produces better services. The key users of play spaces are children and it is therefore imperative that they are central to the consultation process. Disabled children are at the heart of the expertise necessary to develop accessible play space and are therefore the obvious first port of call. It is impossible to second guess the factors which make a play space work well for all children to play together; they have to be asked.

Disabled children, their families and their representative agencies are eager to be consulted but may be hard to find. Appreciating that consultation with any hard to reach group takes time is an important first step.

For disabled children and their families who are often not visible in communities there are many benefits to being involved in consultation. Inclusion in consultation processes is often valued in itself as it raises the self confidence of individuals and groups and affirms entitlement as community members and organisations. Parents of disabled children report that being consulted about the nature of a play space and

involved in its development is one of the factors which increase the likelihood that they will take their children there.

Parents value the support which consultation can give them:

“I have spent so much time banging on peoples doors saying ‘let my child in, let my child in’. When someone comes to you saying ‘we need help in making our provision meet the needs of your son’, you are about ready to fall at their feet!”

Parent

Sometimes consultation can seem a disappointing process where considerable effort reaps little reward. It is important not to be despondent when consultation takes time or seems unproductive and to be constantly prepared to revise attempts to engage families with disabled children. All efforts to make relationships with disabled children and their families help to reduce isolation.

Children and their families report that the most effective forms of consultation occur as part of an on-going relationship. Where ‘one off’ consultations develop into on going dialogue between groups across a range of

Consultation – some strategies to consider

issues, meaningful partnerships to create accessible play spaces can develop.

First steps towards consultation can be initiated by anyone. It is important to realise that disabled children, young people and their families can do the consulting as well as be consulted. When consultation with disabled people is established a cascading effect will often follow which allows for wider communication through social and support groups. Disabled children and their families can be asked to ascertain the views of other people through their own networks and this models good practice in widening participation.

Creative thinking is required to maximise consultation with disabled children and their parents. Families may find it difficult to prioritise attendance at evening meetings, complete questionnaires or participate in protracted discussions. Consultation methods which do not take up much hard-pressed family time will be appreciated.



Consulting and engaging disabled children and their families



Practical example 4

The **Victoria Park Action Group** contacted the **Somerset Inclusion Project (SIP)** for advice on how to involve disabled children in the regeneration of Victoria Park in Taunton. SIP provided contacts and introductions to local disabled children and subsequently worked with the Action Group to secure funding for an inclusion worker to be based in the park at set times to encourage disabled children's participation.

Other kinds of 'intermediaries' can be used to establish contact with different groups of disabled children. For example, individuals with experience of impairment and disability may already be known through your own friends and family and utilising personal contacts can help create links. Often parents whose disabled sons and daughters are adults are happy and willing to take on the role of helping to engage with disabled children and their families.

Teachers can be useful contacts – disabled children can be involved in consultative activities alongside their classmates.

Local and national campaign groups are happy to advise on making contact with disabled children and their families. See the chapter on **Resources, Contacts and Information** for details.



Practical example 5

Kids Together a group of disabled children and their families looking to develop inclusive play and leisure opportunities in **Sheffield** wanted to present positive images of themselves at play.

They took photographs which the disabled children developed into posters and publicity materials for display in libraries, leisure centres and community venues in order to raise awareness of the issues.



Practical example 6

Developing on-going dialogue with disabled children

Me Too! A Mencap project in **Dudley** looking at access to play and leisure services wanted to include the views of disabled children.

They started by contacting children and their families through the disability register. This involved contacting the Health Authority in Dudley asking them to include a letter in their mail out inviting disabled children to tell them about their experiences of play in Dudley.

They then made home visits to those disabled children who came forward and talked with them and their families about their experience of play spaces in the area. Children were given disposable cameras to take photographs of positives and negatives aspects of their play experience.

A one day art workshop was then held to explore the issues raised by children's photographs in greater depth.

In order to feed all this information into local planning and service development an 'Action Planning for Dudley' day was held and attended by disabled young people, their families, service providers, councillors, and community groups.

This one off consultation project led to the establishment of a Children and Young People's Panel to advise and support service providers.



Practical example 7

Schools often take disabled children to public play spaces. It may be possible to go along and observe children's experience of play. Letters to local schools suggesting possibilities for play consultation are often warmly received. Some schools have high quality, well-designed inclusive play spaces and going to them to observe play can help formulate ideas that can be applied elsewhere.

Plymouth City Council held a competition inviting schools and local groups to send in designs and paintings about a play area that everyone could use. The winner of the competition was helped to produce a design brief that was sent out to a range of play manufacturers and landscape design firms who came up with schemes which were assessed on how closely they met the child's brief. This play space is now widely enjoyed by disabled children in Plymouth. Taking display buses out to schools has also been found to work well in involving disabled children in consultation:

"The kids like to be able to wander around them. We use a lot of photographs of equipment and also layouts and landscapes. We get them to stick stars on kit they like and then we take it all back to mull over. We put out flyers letting children know how they can get their views across. I go down and speak to kids in a new playground – or staff and I do – just to get their views to see if there's anything we've missed or where we've gone wrong possibly, things like that. Ten minute consultations with parents waiting to collect children from schools can work surprisingly well."

In **Gainsborough** the management group of an open access adventure playground secured funding for a community artist to construct a new piece of outdoor play equipment. Disabled and non-disabled children were involved in the appointment of the artist who ran a series of children's workshops to produce six design options based on their ideas for the space. The children voted for their favourite design and were then involved in its construction.

For the consultation for this guide the ICE team talked with disabled children, their brothers, sisters, friends and parents in play spaces. Not all disabled children can (or want to) talk about their experiences and so a variety of methods were used. Disposable cameras were given to children and families to record their experience and the researchers watched children play and played with them.

Children and families were invited for refreshments and a quiet space was provided with art materials. Children and families spent time looking at pictures of play spaces and talking about their experience of going to them. These conversations were taped and any drawings were collected. Children were given folders with activities to take home and work on in their own time. Stamped addressed envelopes were provided to encourage them to send their work back.

A week later, participants were invited back to the same play space to look at their photographs and to comment on them. Once again information was picked up in a variety of ways – young people talked, told stories, drew pictures, and played.

Both events were written up, summaries were sent out to families for comments and then fed into the wider research process.



Checklist

Components of effective consultation

Building relationships

Remember that routinely consulting, not always about huge issues, builds confidence and helps to establish relationships.

Use local forums, disabled people's groups and representative agencies where they exist. Local support groups, care-giver networks and social groups can all help to forge consultation links and may encourage participation through their meetings and newsletters.

Target under represented groups by developing different approaches to encourage participation. For example, video packages or CDs with sign language subtitles will benefit many hearing impaired people. People with learning difficulties increasingly use performing arts to facilitate their involvement in consultation and may be willing to involve you in their workshops. Gear some of your strategies towards people who cannot read.

Use intermediaries to access groups you are finding hard to reach. For example, many organisations run by people with learning difficulties have trusted advocates on their books. Providers of children's health and community services will have first-hand contact with families whose children are disabled.

Remember that communication is a two way process. Where you find communication difficult check you are being understood and that your own understanding is clear. Set aside extra time for careful listening. Be ready to accept that some people may have difficulties organising their thoughts and sticking to time schedules.

Developing future good practice

Have you approached consultation as problem sharing? Have you explained to those you are consulting what you need help with? Disabled children and their families can feel vulnerable if the purpose of consultation is not clear.

As you get to know those you are consulting with, and who you may need to consult with in the future, how does this enable you to think about who is missing by virtue of being outside of the consultation loop? People with learning difficulties are often the last to be consulted.

Have you factored in that consultation can be informal as well as formal – what informal strategies could work well for picking up the perspectives of disabled children? Teddy Bear Picnics in LAPs? A Family Day in the park? A Film Making project with teenagers? Sports Van visits to LEAPs, NEAPs or school playgrounds and After School Clubs could provide children with chances to try out equipment and tell you what they think of it.

How can you optimise the links you have with those you have consulted to avoid 'single issue' one-off type consultation? What about fliers or updates in local publications produced by disabled people? Can you bring disabled people or parents and children on to advisory and planning groups?

Chapter 4

Inclusion by design

What this chapter covers

- What to put in the play space
- Thinking points on things disabled children would like
- Implications of the DDA
- Using the natural environment
- Social experience of play
- Thinking points on choosing equipment
- Safety
- Designing for families



“I didn’t realise any of the children playing there were disabled children.”
Playground Amenities Officer

Achieving ‘inclusion by design’ forms the key focus for those working on the development of inclusive play space for disabled children. It is part of the broader task of responding to disabled people’s entitlement to the same rights as non-disabled people (Shakespeare and Watson, 1997). **All children do not need to access play spaces in the same way** but they are all fundamentally entitled to access and good design is needed in order to make this possible. The purpose of this chapter is to extend thinking on accessible play space design and provide examples of how careful attention to design can help to ensure that play spaces are inclusive, comfortable and appealing to disabled children and their families.

The development of accessible play space involves more than attention to physical access. There is more to consider than wide gates and tarmac surfaces or static games panels at low level. Environmental cues can reduce disorientation and are important for children with sensory or cognitive impairments so that they can recognise and navigate their way to and around play spaces. **Materials and textures** can also influence accessibility and the provision of way finding information is important. Good

design is imperative to ensure the accessibility of a play space is not diminished by poor attention to detail.

Equipment does not wholly define a play space. How the design of the space enables people to use it in different ways is important. Use of **natural resources** can greatly enhance the quality of the play experience for disabled children. **Planting** and other **soft landscaping** can dramatically improve accessibility by adding to the richness of play experience. Children can use trees and shrubs to make dens – rhododendrons are especially popular. How the environment makes children and families feel as they use play spaces is a major determinant of accessibility.

Envisaging inclusive play spaces as places where children can have the chance to interact and play with each other should be the starting point when thinking through what is involved in creating inclusion by design.

“They don’t want to be disabled children playing by themselves on equipment labelled ‘disabled equipment’... they want to be out there with their non-disabled peers and brothers and sisters.”

Parent

Spending money and time at the design stage, to get professional help with choosing low maintenance materials and equipment can optimise accessibility and pay real dividends in the long term.

“When you say to community groups ‘perhaps you should have somebody design it?’ they say ‘we’re not wasting people’s money on design, we would rather buy equipment’. This is a real false economy. A low maintenance site, well designed is worth 10 parks with equipment that you can’t maintain.”

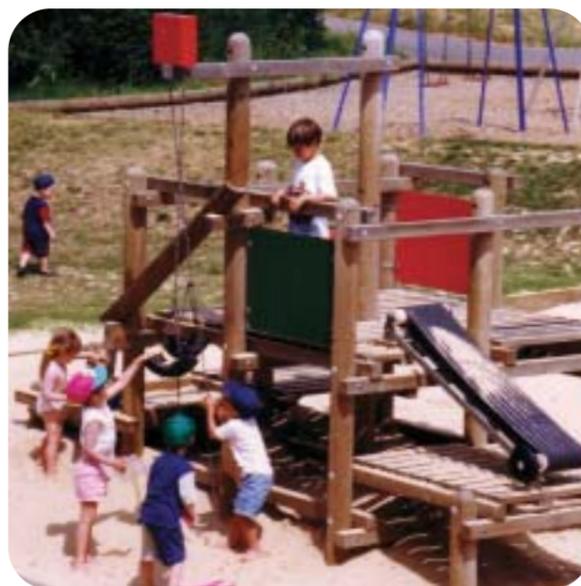
Landscaper Designer

What to put in the play space

Just like their non-disabled peers, disabled children require a wide range of different play opportunities. Some can make full use of and enjoy popular ranges of playground equipment. Other disabled children with complex impairments and high support needs may not wish to access formal equipment, but would instead, enjoy materials that enable them to potter around and be generally included in the play space. **Equipment** plays an important role in play spaces but children also want to do things other than use equipment. For disabled children this may be particularly true if they are unable to use some items of equipment. Although not all children want to use all items of equipment, it is important to make equipment as accessible as possible so that more children have the choice to use it.

It is unrealistic to expect all pieces of equipment or indeed all areas of a play space to be accessible to all children. It is inevitable that certain pieces of equipment will be specifically designed not to be accessible to certain groups of children, for example where age or height mean children might not cope with inbuilt risk factors. Children and families know this.

Inclusion by design



"I noticed that a child used the standard equipment in a way that it was not intended to be used - that kind of different use, adapting for herself, was extremely interesting for me to think about."
Parks and Recreation Officer

Look for equipment already on the market that can be accessed by disabled children. Items popular with children and parents include double width seesaws, large size springers with back supports, hammocks and swings with roomy bucket seats that children can lie down in. Do not overlook the possibility that items available in toddler sizes could be enjoyed by older children and teenagers with learning difficulties if built to a larger scale.

The best way to ascertain what to put in a play space is by working with disabled children to find out what they want. It is important to confront the common criticism made by disabled people that they are not consulted by planners and designers and to find ways of involving end-users in play space design (Imrie and Kumar, 1997).

Surfacing is an issue which shows there are no easy 'right' or 'wrong' answers to the question of what makes play spaces accessible for disabled children. Soft, wheelchair and buggy accessible surfacing is desirable but if uniformly used will reduce the range of sensory experiences available. On the other hand, the use of bark, pebbles, chippings, stones and other small materials

can inhibit wheeled access, might be hazardous for some children and can be difficult for children with mobility impairments to walk on. There are no universally acceptable 'impairment-friendly' recommendations to be made in respect of these design features. The most beneficial design practice is to work in consultation with local disabled children and their families.

Space around different pieces of equipment can enhance or inhibit access. Space between items of equipment can assist children who may simply like to wander around the play area. Open spaces enable children using wheelchairs to manoeuvre around equipment, and are essential if a number of children using wheelchairs want to play together.

Good inclusive play space design enables parents to have different roles. When children have impairments, parents sometimes need to be active facilitators supporting their play, sometimes to be supervising from a safe and comfortable distance and sometimes just enjoying the ordinary experience of half-watching their children play while they themselves relax

and talk to other adults. Benches and tables designed into the play space can help families feel less conspicuous and offer vantage points that enable parents to feel less intrusive in their child's play.

Access to a play space can be extended by places and equipment designed to enable children to sit and watch. Opportunities for playing without joining in can help some children with cognitive impairments to be included in play spaces more easily.

Sculpture and art installations in play spaces broaden the play experience for all children. Involving artists in the process of developing accessible play space can be an invaluable way of 'coming up with amazing things that don't involve a lot of expense - just imagination and using all the senses'.



"I've never thought of an aerial runway as being something that was suitable for kids with disabilities until I looked at these photographs."
Playground Amenities Officer

Inclusion by design



Thinking points

Things disabled children would like to have in play spaces

"Somewhere to go fast, do 'wheelies', have races with skateboarders and scramblers in my wheelchair"

"High up things I can lie on and look down from"

"I like that tunnel with windows and those (points to low-level mazes). They let me be on my own but still see what's going on"

"I like sitting and watching and hearing the laughter and stroking the pebbles"

"A slide at the top of a hill so you don't have to use steps to get up to it and lifts to the top of slides"

"I like going there because of the friendly girl" (Child recalling one encounter which has had a profound effect about his view of a play space)

"Big platforms that are easy to get on for aerial slides"

"Rails on steps so I can do things on my own"

"Trampolines that are in the ground are brilliant but usually they're for under sixes and Martin's sixteen. He loves them and it would be lovely if they were meant for his size"

Thinking points

Implications of the Disability Discrimination Act

Is this product DDA compliant?

The manufacture and design of play equipment is not covered by Part 3 of the DDA as these processes do not involve 'provision of services direct to the public'. However it makes good business sense for manufacturers or designers to make equipment more accessible, and they should consider doing this as a matter of good practice.

The placing of equipment within the play area may mean that it is impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled children to make full use of the play space. From 1 October 2004 the DDA will apply to this and the design and positioning of equipment need to be considered alongside other physical features. For example, the layout of a play area may make it difficult or impossible for wheelchair users to navigate around items of equipment that are placed too close together. Re-siting some of the equipment may be a reasonable adjustment in this case, to allow easier access through the park (see Chapter 5 for more on this). Again, when designing a play area, it is sensible to seek the views of disabled children and young people.

Thinking points

How to choose equipment

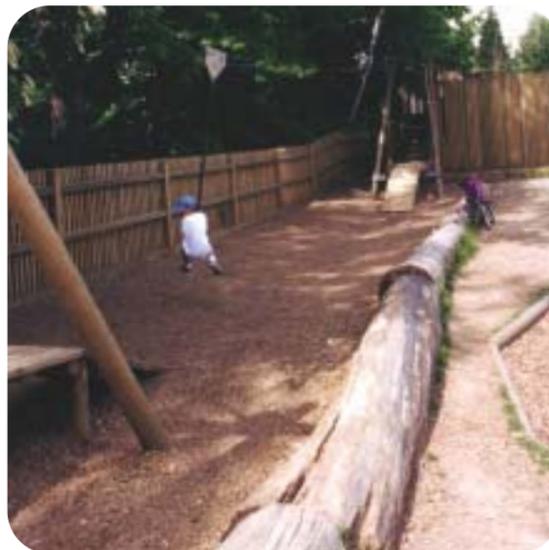
Try to make links with and talk to a range of manufacturers – don't be limited by those who lobby hardest. They are keen to both give advice and to get advice on how to make their ranges more inclusive. Having a dialogue with manufactures can help to avoid expensive mistakes and you do not necessarily have to purchase equipment from them.

Different heights offering unusual perspectives, diverse structures and distinctive materials all widen the possibilities that children with impairments will find equipment accessible.

Colour and contrast can be used to enhance depth perception.

Equipment which enables children with different skills and capacities to play collaboratively is recommended – non-disabled and disabled children say they want to play together.

Inclusion by design



"Great things logs. Stick them together, however many logs you've got and children will be all over."

Using the natural environment

The different consequences of impairment mean that what makes a play space accessible for one child can make it difficult for another. For example, a play space offering little in the way of **texture, light and shade or planting** can limit engagement for some young people with sensory and cognitive impairments. On the other hand, playgrounds designed to maximise sensory engagement may compromise access for other children – those using wheelchairs can be impeded by frequent changes in surfaces, some with specific learning difficulties may find multi-sensory provision over stimulating or confusing. **Well designed play spaces should offer contrasting play opportunities to increase access.** Have both areas for active play and areas for quiet play.

"It doesn't have to be all about equipment. It can be about the surrounding area, the landscape, how you get to the equipment, what happens below the equipment and also the emotional effects of water, timber, metal and planting."

Equipment Manufacturer

Many disabled children like to play in quiet sheltered play areas where noise does not

impede communication. For example, for some young people with a hearing impairment the **natural acoustics** on an exposed windy site might mean that the wind is rushing through their hearing aids, preventing them from hearing.

It is possible to work around constraints imposed by **technical guidance** and standards on the design of accessible play space. Where playground amenities officers are obliged to place equipment in a fenced box inside wider open spaces for example, interesting treatment of the fence line can enhance access to play experiences. Trees or grassed areas can extend and compliment the equipped play space.

"The surroundings here are so lovely and because the trees are inside the fence. The children can actually feel 'lost' which they think is fantastic. They just love to get away from you!"

Parent

Natural resources, particularly logs, can be used to create accessible play opportunities beyond perimeter fencing.



Social experience of play

Scented plants or those which make interesting sounds when grouped together offer access to play experiences for children with sensory impairments.

Water play equipment involving no standing water offers safe opportunities for widening disabled children's access to play in open public spaces.

"...water jets that kids of all ages go in and out of in the summer, and then play in the little streams of water... older people can watch it, adults can watch it, but also for children with complex impairments and high support needs who don't want to take part in these activities it's fantastic to watch and they can participate simply by being there."

Community Organisation Representative

Equipment that is hard for an individual child to use but which could be accessed with the help of a brother, sister or friend is popular as it gives opportunities for social interaction. Equipment offering opportunities for going high and working together, such as a pulley system on a climbing frame, offers children scope for co-operative as well as individual activity. The use of ambiguous equipment is a popular way of supporting children's imaginative and social play, such as an item that can be a train one day and the Loch Ness monster the next.

Parents have pointed out the number of 'missed opportunities' within playgrounds for co-operative play which simple adaptations could transform.

Inclusion by design



Practical example 8

At Magna play space in Rotherham two sand diggers were placed at some distance from each other. Although the diggers were difficult to work they were nevertheless popular and many children 'wanted to have a go'. As parents had to get involved in this play (their children needing assistance) they noticed that were the two diggers to be placed closer together and the design changed slightly to allow for tipping sand from one digger into the other the value of the play would be significantly enhanced.



Thinking points

Supporting the social experience of play

The DDA requires taking reasonable steps to make services accessible to disabled people, and this could involve provision of an auxiliary aid or service if it would enable or make it easier for disabled children to use a play space.

You may decide that it is appropriate to have a member of staff on site at certain times of the day to help supervise all children in the play space and publicise the dates on which this service will be available. This could be of particular benefit to disabled children.

Safety

"Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury."

Play Safety Forum, 2002

Taking risk is an integral part of play: it cannot be eliminated from accessible play space for any child, including disabled and vulnerable children. A balance has to be found between accepting that all children face a degree of risk in open and inclusive public play spaces and the pressures of the increasingly litigious climate in which we live.

Parents say that making play spaces risk free for their disabled children is not their main priority. They wish their disabled children to encounter the risk value of play in exactly the same way as their non-disabled children do. Most say they would rather their children encounter acceptable risk in play than be excluded. Play space design should factor this in.

Parents should not be required to risk their own health and safety to enable their disabled child to access equipment.

"I have to lift her up and yank her about. It's the same on the swings – arms and legs everywhere. I know it's not good for my back – but what can I do? I love to watch her being happy, having a go at things."

Parent

Safety for disabled children and their parents has to be high on the list of priorities for accessible play space development but is not necessarily a clear-cut matter. For example, having 'easy open' gates can facilitate access for wheelchair users but create a point of danger for children with learning difficulties or toddlers. One answer is to use well designed accessible latches on gates rather than push or pull self-closing gates.

Manufacturers are vigilant about equipment design and installation and pay close attention to compliance with safety standards. Some are producing their own guidance on accessible play space which attempt to deal with the diverse requirements of different bodies (such as

Inclusion by design

ROSPA, NPFA, HSE) and examine duties of the DDA – these publications provide a useful point of reference. For details of how to obtain these please see Chapter 6.



Design for families

“Anything that gets people to question initial assumptions about disabled children helps make play spaces more accessible. Otherwise it’s ‘let’s design an environment for children and then try and include the ones we’ve excluded to start with.’”

Campaign Group Representative

However well designed and accessible a play space is, most disabled children and young people will need some kind of personal support, usually provided by family members, to go to it. Features which can be added to the play space to make it more comfortable for parents and care-givers will increase the number of visits disabled children make and also impact on the amount of time they spend in the play space.

For all parents, and particularly those whose children have complex impairments, the possibility of finding a **shelter** near to a play space increases the length of time they are likely to spend there. A nearby café is a popular feature of the top-rated play spaces for all families, and for those with vulnerable children can be a key determinant of whether a play space is viable. Provision of safe and warm places for children and young people with medical needs can vastly improve

accessibility. Though children are often happy to play in the rain, the provision of covered spaces increases the possibility of their being able to do so, and if accompanied, adults have the option of taking refuge.

Storage facilities can improve accessibility for families needing to bring medical equipment such as nebulisers, oxygen cylinders, tube feeding equipment or bulky changing bags. Shelter to keep wheelchairs dry is helpful.

The provision of **accessible toilets** is crucial to the development of inclusive play space. Lack of accessible toilets threatens the dignity and well being of disabled children and young people and will mean families cannot use otherwise accessible provision.

“There is no point in having accessible play facilities if we don’t have accessible toilets and places for changing” **Parent**

Consideration must be given to **transport and parking facilities** as neglect of these issues means parents with disabled children reluctantly have to make the decision that a play space is inaccessible.

Inclusion by design

Signs can be used to counter discrimination and make disabled children and families feel more comfortable in play spaces. Information can be given in different community languages as well as Braille or in illustrated signed languages. Signs at eye level for children can make a big difference in welcoming disabled children and their families to public play spaces. Large dark text on a light background is suggested.



Quick Wins

Sign and notice boards can make a big difference in welcoming disabled children and their families to public play spaces. Feeling welcome adds to accessibility.

Grouted lettering so that partially sighted children and parents can trace written information has the added advantage of providing an interesting play experience to many children.



Checklist

Inclusion by design

Listen to disabled children and their families who would like to use the play space.

Provide different areas within the play space. Busy places and a restful area within the general melee for those who just want to sit and watch and be part of the experience.

Provide shelter and shade. These can be screens or structures and seating to protect from the wind, rain and sun.

Incorporate planting, trees and grass into the play area. These elements enhance the whole play area, help to define the spaces within the area and can provide reference points or navigational markers for children when playing.

Use different materials and surfaces to give different experiences, to stimulate and engage.

Water and sand can provide fun sensory experiences which are ideal for encouraging inclusive play.

Make sure tables and benches are wheelchair accessible.

Remember that developing accessible play space isn't just about getting the right fixed equipment.

Section 2

What this section covers

- A suggested framework to help you develop accessible play space
- Thinking points, suggested actions and practical examples to help you move forward
- Funding issues
- Details of useful resources, contacts and information
- Glossary of key terms

The purpose of this section of the guide is to provide examples of where and how working together effectively facilitates the process of developing play spaces all children can enjoy. It aims to provide useful contacts and information to help and encourage you to move forward.



“ Disabled children, their parents, politicians, planners, housing developers, manufacturers, playground officers and so it goes on... they all need to work together on accessible play space. Now my question is how do you get all this lot to work together? ”

Regeneration Officer



Chapter 5

Moving forward

In this chapter a framework is set out which will assist you in developing accessible play space irrespective of your own starting points. The framework is equally applicable therefore to providers, campaign groups, community groups, individuals, disabled children and their families.

What this chapter covers

- Making connections
- Setting a policy context
- Establishing responsibility for play
- Promoting partnership working
- Involving the community

Make connections

To engage in joined up working you need to know who to join up with in ways that can improve access for all. Individual parents lobbying for inclusive play space need to link up with key individuals, organisations and agencies who can support and advise them. Frequently there is an individual in an area or local authority 'championing' play and play space development. These individuals need to make contact with disabled children and their families, and to galvanise the support of like minded peers and colleagues, in order to strengthen accessible play space development and management initiatives.



Thinking points

Identify potential partners and stakeholders.

Who may be interested in accessible play space? Who's out there who can help? Use the contacts in the **Resources, Contacts and Information** section for ideas about who to contact. People in your local area may well be working on relevant projects already.

Remember to include disabled children and their families, individuals 'championing' play in your area, elected members, politicians, planners, designers, equipment manufacturers, local authorities, local councils, housing associations. All these people say they want to be involved in accessible play space development.

Draw together reviews from existing provision and share information with interested groups – this will enable people to make connections between on going projects.

In making links with others and forging connections between diverse organisations – both statutory and non statutory – **you** can help create a framework for accessible play space to develop and move forward.

Establish responsibility for play

Feeling you are on your own and not knowing who is 'responsible for play,' and therefore who to go to for help and advice, is the first hurdle at which planning for accessible play space can fall. Clarity on who is responsible for accessible play space development is often hard to come by: 'it's split between the planning department, the environment team and the disability team' is a typical description. **Defining roles and responsibilities** will help move small projects and larger initiatives forward.



Thinking points

Asking questions and drawing different people into the project is a good starting point for accessible play space development whatever your own role or interest.

Find out which departments and individuals within an authority or area have responsibility for play. Who's job is it? Who's passion is it? Who has power and influence and how can you make yours felt?

Now that **Local Strategic Partnerships** are in place an opportunity exists to influence **Community Plans** in support of play. There are often key decision makers looking for projects which can help to foster better working between, within and across departments, to improve policy co-ordination.

Does the Local Strategic Partnership have a role in establishing responsibility for accessible play space development? Often where play is included as a focus for discussion within these and in Community Plans, workers on the ground will be far better placed to argue for rolling programmes and capital financing which can make accessible play spaces a reality.

Moving forward

Set policy and legal context

For local authority workers, sharing information at local level can help identify barriers to accessible play space and show where priorities lie. A good understanding of policy matters means resources can be employed where they are most needed. By sharing local information and starting to overlay the demographics – looking at problems with areas of deprivation, and space available for development – planning for accessible play space can be better focused.

For groups outside local authorities working to develop accessible play space, knowledge of relevant policy context and priorities can help determine where key support might come from and how you can make your influence felt. Knowing how accessible play fits with other agendas will help you target those you could usefully be working with.

“ It is really interesting to me to see the links between what I am doing and what policy people are thinking. This helps me deal more effectively with my elected members in pointing out to them why play is a health issue as well as an environmental one.”

Regeneration Officer



Thinking points

How does developing accessible play space in your area fit with broader policies and other agendas?

Make a case for developing accessible play space by developing a strategic framework. Use the broader policy context to increase the profile of accessible play space.

The ODPM Sustainable Communities and Green and Public Spaces agenda connect with accessible play as a way in to understanding and promoting social cohesion. Living Spaces, Policy Planning Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and the Strategic Enabling Scheme are potential vehicles with which to carry forward projects to improve accessible play spaces.

Department of Health believes that the provision of outdoor play opportunities is linked to the reduction of obesity in childhood for both disabled children and their non-disabled peers. Improved access to outside play spaces which can be used by disabled children and their families could reduce the stresses which lead families to require service intervention.

The Children's Play Review commissioned by Department for Culture, Media and Sport reviews play opportunities and provision.

The Children and Young People's Strategy being launched by the Children and Young Peoples Unit (CYPU) aims to improve services for all children and emphasises 'enjoyment' and 'fulfilment' as key determinants of a child's positive development. CYPU looks to inclusive play opportunities and inclusive leisure services as important mechanisms for delivery of these key strategic outcomes.

Opportunity for All provides a context for a cross-departmental review of how policies have a bearing on the lives of disabled people.

National Sure Start places high emphasis on the importance of play for younger children. Sure Start new build projects and converted space projects offer potential for the development of inclusive play space which may be linked to the use of school premises in extended capacities.



Thinking points How far is the legal framework followed?

Think about the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Is it unreasonably difficult for disabled children to use play spaces in your area? Are physical barriers preventing use of play spaces?

When designing and developing an accessible play space, it is helpful to consult fully with disabled children and young people.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA): the Code of Practice provides guidance on the duties placed on those providing goods, facilities or services to the public by Part 3 of the DDA. Provided that a play space is open to the public it is likely to be covered by the DDA. However, the manufacture and design of products (which can include play equipment) are not covered by part 3 of the DDA because they do not involve provision of services direct to the public.

Since December 1996 it has been unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably for a reason related to their disability.

Since October 1999, service providers have had to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. This might include providing information about play areas in alternative formats like large print or Easy Read versions.

From October 2004, service providers have also to make reasonable adjustments to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access for disabled people. It makes sense for service providers to plan ahead by taking advantage of any opportunities which may arise to make the necessary alterations to physical features before 2004.

Reasonable adjustments are about taking reasonable steps to make services accessible to disabled people. Examples include:

- The layout of a play area may make it difficult or impossible for wheelchair users to navigate around items of equipment that are placed too close together. Re-siting some of the equipment to allow easier access through the play space may be a reasonable adjustment.
- A play area provider decides that it is appropriate to have a member of staff on site at certain times of the day to help supervise all children in the play area, and they publicise the dates on which this service will be available. This may be of particular benefit to disabled children.

When taking reasonable steps the Code of Practice suggests the following factors should be taken into account:

- whether taking any particular steps would be effective in overcoming the difficulty that disabled people face in accessing the service;
- the extent to which it is practicable for the service provider to take the steps;
- the financial and other costs of making the adjustment;
- the extent of any disruption which taking the steps would cause;
- the extent of the service provider's financial and other resources;
- the amount of any resources already spent on making adjustments; and
- the availability of financial or other assistance.

The Code of Practice on Rights of Access provides guidance on how the Act might apply (see Chapter 6 for more information).

Moving forward

Promote partnership working

Play forums typically co-ordinate consultations with local people on what play facilities and equipment are wanted, conducting surveys, for example, and often working in imaginative and innovative ways.

Consider establishing a **play forum** to bring interested people together. A play forum can be a well-defined group or a relatively loose assemblage of like-minded individuals set up on the lines of 'if you have play in your remit or you're interested in developing accessible play space then come along and join.'

Where play forums do not exist, individuals can still promote partnership working.

Whether you are a parent, group or local authority officer, it will be beneficial to bring **elected members** into consultation to develop the accessibility of local authority play spaces. Gaining the commitment of elected members is particularly effective in ensuring they take a proactive approach. In Essex politicians brought in to the debate now insist that every playground must have at least one piece of accessible equipment.

It is helpful to ensure **local politicians** are on side for accessible play space development

because they are well placed to cultivate a 'can do' approach which will encourage key players such as planners and developers.

For **local authority workers**, developing partnership working between **planners** and other groups will significantly enhance positive outcomes. Drop-in services are ideal as these enable people needing to talk to planners to sit down and discuss everything so that there are no problems once a planning application goes in. Put time into building relationships with planners and planning departments to ensure that all planning applications with relevance to play come to the attention of relevant local authority officers.

Providing information and support to people who may not be familiar with accessible play space issues is important. Links with seemingly unconnected organisations can be productive, for example, the **Countryside Agency** can support small parish councils.

Where built play provision is the responsibility of **parish and town councils** annual inspections by local authorities can act as an advisory resource which could potentially assist the development of

accessible play space. If your local authority does not do this, put pressure on them to share their expertise. Where **housing associations** have ownership and responsibility for maintaining play spaces bring them into partnerships to promote accessible play space development too. Think about the different expertise partners can bring in. Who can help co-ordination?

Practical example 9

A playground amenities officer in Hampshire found that sorting out local playgrounds involved a lot of talking to angry residents and marching round playgrounds looking at burnt out equipment. She decided to contact everybody she could think of with play in their remit, working through the telephone directory to make first contacts. Slowly her efforts to involve other people started to make an impact and it is now the case that playgrounds are recognised as important.

Practical example 10

A parent in Leicestershire wrote to her council and lobbied MPs through surgeries and meetings as her son was unable to access local play spaces. She found herself being passed from one official to another until eventually she knew every one she needed to know to get an inclusive play space built that her son could use and enjoy.

Practical example 11

In Sheffield planners and playground amenities officers attend area panels which the Local Authority has established to maximise contact and consultation with local communities. This enables officers to get key planning discussions opened up so that decisions are informed by the views of a wide range of stakeholders.

Moving forward

Practical example 12

In Plymouth playground amenities officers made links with a youth project run by the police to develop a youth shelter which the youngsters wanted. They came across another project where young people were welding small bits of metal that were ending up in a skip. They talked with all parties to evolve a project where the young welders designed and installed a shelter for the police youth project.

Practical example 13

A Friends Group in Sheffield got together and started to push the local authority to improve the accessibility and quality of a local playground. The group started fundraising but quickly realised that substantial monies were needed and so with the advice of the local authority, applied and secured lottery funding. This involved the Friends Group becoming 'lease owners' for the play area. With local authority assistance the play space has now been rebuilt.

The Friends Group now have a central role in the maintenance of the play space. Although the local authority is still responsible for the management of the space, under the remit of the Friends' Group local people have been trained to use appropriate chemicals safely to remove graffiti. There is ongoing communication between the Friends Group and the local authority and they are now raising money for a café on site.

Involve the community

Encourage agencies connected with open spaces and parks, residents groups and community groups to have an input to the design, implementation and sustaining of accessible play spaces. Effective publicity mechanisms to 'let people see what you are doing' are important and need not necessarily be elaborate or costly:

Set up or work with local **Friends Groups** which are increasingly being established to advocate and develop accessible play space initiatives.

For **community groups**, making use of providers experience can be useful to working to develop a play space. An enthusiastic friends group may, for example, set about selecting equipment from the internet which a manufacturer, local authority officer or other play provider would realise is inappropriate. Develop an ongoing dialogue with other people who offer complimentary expertise and provide feedback.

How can you make use of **Community Wardens** and **Community Safety Officers** who know where to go for specialist technical advice? They are out and about looking around play spaces on a regular

basis and their presence helps to build stronger community ownership of the site. They are well positioned to pick up on local priorities for accessible play space development.

Finding ways to include different sections of the community in a process of consultation around accessible play space development contributes towards a feeling of local ownership which can help overcome common problems and enhance sustainability.

Moving forward



Practical example 14

An Assistant Director for the Green Environment from Cheltenham reported a situation where a lot of money was spent on new play equipment which was vandalised within a couple of years. The local authority concerned subsequently began to work more closely with local communities to ascertain community needs. More recently equipped playgrounds have not been damaged and this success is attributed to working in partnership.

The Victoria Park Action Group, in Taunton is made up of local residents, Carnival Club representatives, local school groups and a Barnardo's Inclusion Project. It was formed in order to revitalise a forgotten park and to improve facilities for all the community. Capital funding was received as community facility money from a number of housing developers. In addition the voluntary status of some of the participant groups made it possible for them to secure grant funding to develop consultation with disabled children and supervised play schemes seeking to foster an inclusive atmosphere. It was the combination of people working together that enabled successful funding applications.

Funding

Making play spaces accessible does not have to cost the earth. This said, obtaining funding can be complex as often playground amenities officers have no capital programme, a very small repairs budget. Sure Start and Lottery funding can be used for new development. In addition, local authorities can negotiate with developers to set aside sums of money for the development of accessible play space under Section 106 Planning Obligation Agreements. Details of this are provided in the Glossary.

Where resources are hard to come by developing a show case accessible play space might be a initial goal. Remember the priority for most parents and disabled children is to have accessible neighbourhood play spaces close to home.

Be aware that difficulties getting money to develop accessible play spaces can seriously dent interest and enthusiasm at the planning stages. Money is available, but to access it you may need to seek out guidance on how to secure it. It is important not to underestimate the amount of paper work often attached to funding applications. You will need time and support from different

agencies to work through the funding application process effectively. Use the Resources, Contacts and Information chapter for ideas on who might be able to help. When funding applications are unsuccessful be prepared to give further encouragement and be positive so that momentum is not lost.

A good infrastructure of community supporters and professional collaborators needs to be built to increase flexibility for responding to funding streams which become available at short notice.

Working within and around financial constraints is one of the most significant challenges in the process of planning and developing accessible play space. It can be helpful to remember that not all play spaces will cost a lot.

“ Play equipment is only a small part of it and what with all the hassle of managing maintenance, what would be good is to provide areas within communities that are just the old village green type thing where you can go and meet and have a chat with your mates and you get to play and create relationships. If you want inclusion

you're going to have to create those relationships.”

Campaign Group Representative

Remember that good design can create low maintenance for equipped or non-equipped accessible play spaces.

The cost of installation and maintenance of toilets in play spaces is often cited as prohibitive but local officers are finding ways of negotiating how the surrounding environment can offer support.

Working to develop accessible play space with multi-agency funding is a way of facilitating skill sharing and will maximise sustainability of a project.

Agencies with experience of managing funding such as national children's charities are often happy to work in partnership with local community groups to circumvent difficulties related to funding. Use the Resources, contacts and information listed to get in touch.

Moving forward

This simple illustration (next page) shows that when going through the process of developing accessible play space there is no fixed order in which the practices discussed above should be followed.

Working with others will give you the best chance of developing accessible play space and help in attracting and administering funding.



Practical example 15

In Hertfordshire a popular play space is located next to a privately owned leisure centre in which the toilets are free and openly available.

Establish responsibility for play

- Find out which departments and individuals within an authority or area have responsibility for play.
- Who has power and influence and how can you make yours felt?
- Does the Local Strategic Partnership have a role?

Promote partnership working

- Think about the different expertise partners can bring in.
- Who can help co-ordination?
- Would establishing a play forum help?

Make connections

- Identify potential partners and stakeholders.
- Identify who may be interested in accessible play space (use the **Resources, Contacts and Information** section in this guide).
- Remember to include: disabled children and their families, individuals championing play, elected members, politicians, planners, designers, equipment manufacturers, local authorities, local councils, housing associations.

Set a policy context

- Make a case for developing accessible play space by developing a strategic framework.
- Use the broader policy context to increase the profile of accessible play space.
- Think about the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Is it unreasonably difficult for disabled children to use play spaces in your area? Are physical barriers preventing use of play spaces?

Involve the community

- Find ways to include different sections of the community in a process of consultation.
- Encourage agencies connected with open spaces and parks, residents groups and community groups to have an input to the design, implementation and sustaining of accessible play spaces.

Remember: working with others will give you the best chance of developing accessible play space and help in attracting and administering funding but making play spaces accessible does not have to cost the earth.

Chapter 6

Resources, Contacts and Information

All the contacts and organisations listed below have contributed to the production of this guide in one form or another and are happy to receive queries and questions.

What this chapter covers

- Contacts and further information for all practical examples cited in the guide
- Contacts and information on relevant policy
- Contacts to help you consult and engage with disabled children and their families.

- Contacts to help you think about general issues related to inclusive play
- Contacts to give you information on technical, health and safety aspects
- Contacts to help you think about design issues.



Plymouth Central Park

Contacts and further information for all practical examples cited in the guide

Practical Example 1

Kevin Gilderson
Town Hall
Brentwood Borough Council
Ingrave Road
Brentwood
Essex CM15 8AY
Tel: 01277 261 111 x520

Nick Jones
Parks and Amenities Manager
Heritage & Leisure
Plymouth City Council
Civic Centre
Plymouth PL1 2EW
Tel: 01752 304 840

Contact a Family
209-211, City Road
London EC1V 1JN
Tel: 020 7608 8700
Email: www.cafamily.org.uk

Inclusion Childhood and Education Ltd
2, Orchard View
Hathersage
Derbyshire S32 1AQ
Email: ICEResearch@aol.com

Calderdale Parent and Carers Forum
Hanson Lane Enterprise Centre
Halifax HX1 5PG
Tel: 01422 343 090
Email: cpcc@btconnect.com

Practical Example 2

Jacqueline Winstanley
Play and Children's Services
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
Civic Centre
2nd Floor, Wellsprings
Le Mans Close
Bolton BL1 1US
Tel: 01204 334 119
Email: jacqueline.winstanley@bolton.gov.uk

Practical Example 3

For details of the **Yorkshire Play Forum**
Ian Mitchell
Regeneration Officer
(specialising in playgrounds)
Meersbrook Park, Brook Road
Sheffield S8 9FL
Tel: 0114 273 4342
Email: ian.Mitchell@sheffield.gov.uk

Practical Example 4

Victoria Park Action Group
C/o Somerset Inclusion Project
The Town House
34, Wellington Road
Taunton
Somerset TA1 5AW
Tel: 01823 257 917

Somerset Inclusion Project
Vicky Smith
The Town House
34, Wellington Road
Taunton
Somerset TA1 5AW
Tel: 01823 257 917

Practical Example 5

Kids Together Club
C/o DISC
Paces Centre
Packhorse Lane
Sheffield S35 3HY
Tel: 0114 284 5000

Practical Example 6

Michelle Cox
Me Too! Project
St. James House
Trinity Road
Dudley DY1 1JB

Practical Example 7

Plymouth City Council
For details see **Practical Example 1**

Gainsborough Adventure Playground
Riseholme Road
Gainsborough
Lincolnshire
Tel: 01427 617 165
Email: play@gapa.freemove.co.uk

Resources, Contacts and Information



Practical Example 8

Magna Playground
Magna Science Adventure Centre
Sheffield Road
Templeborough
Rotherham S60 1DX

Practical Example 9

Rachel Halpin-McVan
Used Projects Manager
Test Valley Borough Council
Beech Hirst
Weyhill Road
Andover
Hampshire SP10 3AJ
Tel: 01264 368 801
Email: rhalpin-mcvan@testvalley.gov.uk

Practical Example 10

The TOCK Inclusive Playground Project
Julie Marriott
Wisteria Cottage
Ratby Lane
Leicestershire, LE67 9RJ
Tel: 01530 245 468

Practical Example 11

Sheffield City Council
For details see **Practical Example 3**

Practical Example 12

Plymouth City Council
For details see **Practical Example 1**

Practical Example 13

Friends of Spider Park
Ian Mitchell
Regeneration Officer
(specialising in playgrounds)
Meersbrook Park
Brook Road
Sheffield S8 9FL
Tel: 0114 2500 500 x275

Practical Example 14

John Crowther
Assistant Director Green Environment
Cheltenham Borough Council
Central Depot
Swindon Road
Cheltenham GL51 9JZ
Tel: 01242 250 019
Email: johnc2@cheltenham.gov.uk

Victoria Park Action Group
For details see **Practical Example 4**

Practical Example 15

Trevor Waldock
East Hertfordshire District Council
Environmental Services Department
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
Hertfordshire SG13 8EQ
Tel: 01279 655 261 x416

Contacts and information on relevant policy

Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
Code of Practice: Rights of Access – Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises. London, Stationery Office.
Can be obtained via the internet from Disability Rights Commission website.

Disability Rights Commission
DRC Helpline
FREEPOST MID02164
Stratford upon Avon CV37 9BR
Tel: 08457 622 633
Textphone: 08457 622 644
www.drc-gb.org

The Children's Play Review (2003)
commissioned by Department for Culture, Media and Sport
www.culture.gov.uk

Living Places – Cleaner, Safer, Greener (2002) London
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
www.odpm.gov.uk

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 17: Open Space, Sport & Recreation (2002) London, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister:
www.odpm.gov.uk

Resources, Contacts and Information

The **Strategic Enabling Scheme**, an ODPM initiative, provides local authorities with direct advice on drafting and renewing their green space strategies, as well as training through group events and published guidance. For details and further information contact: **Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)**: www.cabe.org.uk

Tomorrow's Future: Building A Strategy for Children and Young People sets out the Children and Young People's Unit's foundation for developing the Government's overarching strategy for children and young people. It also summarises the key initiatives the Government has introduced since 1997 to improve services for children and young people and better their life chances. Copies of the strategy can be viewed from the Unit's web-site www.cypu.gov.uk

National Sure Start places emphasis on the importance of play for younger children. Sure Start new build projects and converted space projects offer potential for inclusive play projects. For more information view: www.surestart.gov.uk

Living Spaces provides grants to help people improve their open spaces in their neighbourhood and create valuable places for the whole community to enjoy. It can help create and improve a range of spaces including local parks, play areas, kick about areas, community gardens and city farms as long as the space is open to the public and near where people live. In addition to this, Living Spaces provides a network of enablers to assess applications. www.living-spaces.org.uk

Contacts to help you consult and engage with disabled children and their families

Parents for Inclusion
Unit 2
70, South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL
Tel: 020 7735 7735
www.parentsforinclusion.org

Children's Society
Edward Rudolf House
Margery Street
London WC1X 0JL
Tel: 020 7841 4400
www.the-childrens-society.org.uk

Council for Disabled Children
8, Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
Tel: 020 7843 1900
www.ncb.org.uk

Down's Syndrome Association
155, Mitcham Road
London SW17 9PG
Tel: 020 8682 4001
www.dsa-uk.com

Mencap
123, Golden Lane
London EC1Y 0RT
Tel: 020 7454 0454
www.mencap.org.uk

WhizzKids
1, Warwick Row
London SW1E 5ER
Tel: 020 7233 6600
www.whizz-kidz.org.uk

Sense
11-13, Clifton Terrace
Finsbury Park
London N4 3SR
Tel: 020 7272 7774
www.sense.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)
19-23, Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL
Tel: 020 7296 8000
Textphone: 020 7296 8001
www.rnid.org.uk

Resources, Contacts and Information



Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
105, Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Tel: 020 7388 1266
www.rnib.org.uk

The Sensory Trust
Watering Lane Nursery
Pentewan
St. Austell
Cornwall PL26 6BE
Email: enquiries@sensorytrust.org.uk

Childrens Links
Holland House
Horncastle College
Mareham Road
Horncastle
Lincolnshire
Tel: 01507 528 300
Email: sueb@childrenslinks.org.uk

Somerset IMPACT,
Mary Stanley House
10, Castle Street
Bridgewater TA6 3DB
Tel: 01278 444 794

The **Children's Society** has produced **Ask Us!** – a multi-media presentation which allows disabled children and young people who cannot speak or write to present their messages using their preferred media: video, music, art, photography, animation, stories, interviews and discussion. The messages and images contained challenge the assumption that impairment prevents disabled children expressing their views. Through the CD-ROM, young people say they want what other children want: to go to their local parks and play with children in their neighbourhood.

Contacts to help you think about general issues related to accessible play

Kidsactive
6, Aztec Row
Berner Road
London N1 0PW
Tel: 020 7736 4443
www.kidsactive.org.uk

Children's Play Council
National Children's Bureau
8, Wakley House
London EC1V 7QE
Tel: 020 7843 6304
www.ncb.org.uk/cpc

Play Safety Forum
National Children's Bureau
8, Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
Tel: 020 7843 6016
www.ncb.org.uk/cpc/playsafety

Playlink
Unit 5
11, Mowll Street
London SW9 6BG
Tel: 020 7820 3800
www.playlink.org.uk

London Play
Units F6 and F7
89/93, Fonthill Road
London N4 3JH
Tel: 020 7272 7670
www.londonplay.org

Play Safety Forum
The **Children's Play Council** hosts the **Play Safety Forum** for the **Department of Culture, Media and Sport**. This group brings together national agencies involved in regulating, overseeing and implementing play safety issues, including the Health & Safety Executive, inspection agencies, play agencies, safety organisations and providers.

Playlink works with local communities to support provision of high quality opportunities for children's play that are stimulating, inclusive, and fun. Playlink engages with play providers in a number of ways and can be contacted for advice with regards to health and safety issues, and risk assessments.

Resources, Contacts and Information



Contacts to help you think about technical, health and safety aspects

Health and Safety Executive

HSE Infoline
Caerphilly Business Park
Caerphilly CF83 3GG
Tel: 08701 545 500
www.hse.gov.uk

Trevor Baker

Public Sector Software Ltd
PO Box 9000
Royal Lemington Spa
CV32 6YD
Tel: 01926 421 623
Email: tbaker@pssltd.co.uk
<http://www.playsafe.co.uk>

John Hicks and Associates

41A, Upland Road
Selly Park
Birmingham B29 7JS
Tel: 0121 472 1276
Email: johnhicks@lineone.net
www.playgroundinspection.co.uk
www.access-audits.co.uk
www.orston.org

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

The Old Village Hall
Kingston Lisle Business Centre
Wantage
Oxon OX12 9QX
Tel: 01367 820 988/9
Email: info@rospaplaysafety.co.uk

Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM)

ILAM House
Lower Basildon
Reading
Berkshire RG8 9NE
Tel: 01491 874 800
Email: info@ilam.co.uk

National Playing Fields Association (NPFA)

Stanley House
St. Chads Place
London WC1X NHH
Tel: 020 7833 5376
www.npfa.co.uk

Association of Play Industries (API)

Federation House
National Agricultural Centre
Stoneleigh Park
Warwickshire CV8 2RF
Tel: 02476 414 999
www.playindustries.org

Contacts to help you think about design issues

Centre for Accessible Environments

Nutmeg House
60, Gainsford Street
London SE1 2NY
Tel/textphone: 020 7357 8182
Fax: 020 7357 8183
Email: info@cae.org.uk

Learning through Landscapes

Floor 3, Southside Offices
The Law Courts
Winchester
Hampshire SO23 9DL
Tel: 01962 846 258
www.ltl.org.uk

Resources, Contacts and Information



Glossary

Accessible Play Space

A play space in which physical and environmental barriers which could exclude children with impairments – such as uneven surfaces, narrow gates and steps – are removed by good environmental planning and design.

Inclusive Play Space

An accessible play space in which disabled children and their non-disabled peers feel comfortable being together in the ways they choose. Making play spaces inclusive refers to actively circumventing social barriers such as fear, embarrassment or discriminatory attitudes which could exclude children with impairments from otherwise accessible places to play. It is important to note that the term 'inclusive' is also sometimes broadened to refer to other factors such as ethnicity, for example when social inclusion is being referred to.

Section 106 Agreements

Types of Planning Obligation authorised by **Section 106** of the **Town and Country Planning Act 1990** as amended by the **Planning and Compensation Act 1991**. When a developer seeks planning permission a Section 106 agreement

is negotiated between the developers and the planning authority. These agreements are the main instrument for placing obligations on developers, often to require them to spend money on providing community benefits. Section 106 agreements are usually in force for 15-20 years but can be appealed after 5 years.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17)

A planning framework for providing, protecting and enhancing open spaces. It sets out how the government expects local authorities to plan for delivery of open spaces and puts forward a needs-based approach. Central to PPG 17 is the requirement for local authorities to assess current and future needs of local communities for a range of types of open spaces. Planning Policy Guidance is not statutory but should be taken into account when a local authority is preparing its development plan.

Local Areas for Play (LAPS)

A small area of unsupervised open space designed to give accompanied young children up to 6 years old play activities close to where they live; that is one minute

walking time from home along pedestrian routes (60 metres in a straight line). LAPs typically have no play equipment.

Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPS)

An unsupervised play area for accompanied children of early school age, up to 8 years. These should offer at least 5 types of play equipment. LEAPs should be located 400 metres or 5 minutes walking time along pedestrian routes (240 metres in a straight line), from nearby dwellings. Seating should be provided for accompanying adults.

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPS)

An unsupervised play area servicing a substantial residential area, equipped mainly for children between the ages of 8 and 14. NEAPs should offer at least 8 different types of play opportunity including a kick about area, wheeled play opportunities, and seating for accompanying adults and teenagers to use as a meeting place. NEAPs should be located 1,000 metres or 15 minutes walking time along pedestrian routes (600 metres in a straight line), from nearby dwellings.

Community Plans

The **Local Government Act 2000** places a duty on principal local authorities to prepare a **community plan** for promoting the economic and environmental well being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSPS)

A **Local Strategic Partnership** (LSP) is a single body that brings together at a local level the different parts of the public, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together. Core tasks of an LSP are to prepare and implement a community strategy for the area, identify and deliver the most important things which need to be done, keep track of progress, and keep it up-to-date; bring together local plans, partnerships and initiatives to provide a forum through which mainstream public service providers work effectively together to meet local needs and priorities.

Resources, Contacts and Information

European Standards BSEN 1176 and 1177
BS EN 1176 1177 are European safety standards that have been adopted in the UK. They are not mandatory but compliance represents good practice. The standards cover general safety requirements and test methods relating to equipment, the spacing between play structures and areas of impact absorbing surfacing.



References

Children Act 1989, Schedule 2, Paragraph 6 and 8. London, HMSO

Children's Play Council (2002) *More Than Swings and Roundabouts: Planning for outdoor play*. London, Children's Play Council

Brown, F. (Ed) (2003) *Playwork: Theory and Practice*. Buckingham, Open University Press

Disability Rights Commission (2002) *Code of Practice: Rights of Access, Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises*, The Stationary Office

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