

Managing parks in the age of financial austerity

Procuring play equipment
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www.playengland.org.uk/northwest



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Play in parks



- Importance and value of play in parks
- national policy and local context
- playful parks – design, risk and maintenance
- play procurement and issues.



Importance and value of play in parks



Parks contribute to....

- health and well-being
- leisure opportunities
- community cohesion
- quality of the environment
- fun

Play contributes to....

- health and well-being
- leisure opportunities
- community cohesion
- quality of the environment
- fun



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Interdependence – shared challenges



- Range of opportunities for children, young people and the wider public
- quality of design and delivery
- access and inclusion
- maintaining and sustaining.





The evidence – physical benefits



Research by University College London found that outdoor and unstructured play is one of the best forms of exercise for children. The report concluded that free play provides children with more calorific benefit than any exercise other than PE classes.

Making children's lives more active, University College London, 2004





The evidence – mental health

Good play experiences can enhance children and young people's mental health.

In 1999, the Mental Health Foundation reported that the increasingly limited amount of time children have to play outside, or to attend supervised play projects, was a factor in the rise of mental ill health in young people.

Brighter Futures Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health,
Mental Health Foundation, 1999





The evidence – emotional well-being



Play and unstructured time that allow for peer interactions are important components of social and emotional well-being. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them.

Play and health: Making the links, Play England, 2008



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Play and parks – children's perspectives





Barriers to play



- Fears and perceptions – traffic, bullies, strangers
- adults – fears, time, pressure
- child-unfriendly planning
- lack of safe and clean play areas
- costs and access
- travel and routes to play.



National policy context

- Children's Plan
- The Play Strategy
- play pathfinder and playbuilder funding
- embedding play.



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The Children's Plan
Building brighter futures –
Summary

department for
children, schools and families

**Play
England**

Making space for play

One of five first principles

‘Children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life.’



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The vision for 2020



- In every residential area there are a variety of supervised and unsupervised places for play, free of charge;
- Local neighbourhoods are, and feel like, safe, interesting places to play;
- Routes to children's play space are safe and accessible for all children and young people;
- **Parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people, and are well maintained and well used;**



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The vision for 2020



Making space for play

- Children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours;
- Children and young people play in a way that respects other people and property;
- Children and young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces;
- **Play spaces are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people, including disabled children, and children from minority groups in the community.**



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Funding for play

£235m - 2008/11

- £200m capital
- £35m revenue

Nationally, there are 30 play pathfinders and 122 playbuilders.

£1 million plus to third-sector adventure playgrounds.



Embedding the Play Strategy

- Guidance to local authorities, Children's Trust Boards and Local Strategic Partnerships.
- Sustaining improvements and planning the development of provision and space for children and young people's play and informal recreation.
- Improve performance under **NI 199**: level of children and young people's satisfaction with play areas and parks (*from TellUs survey*).



Making space for play

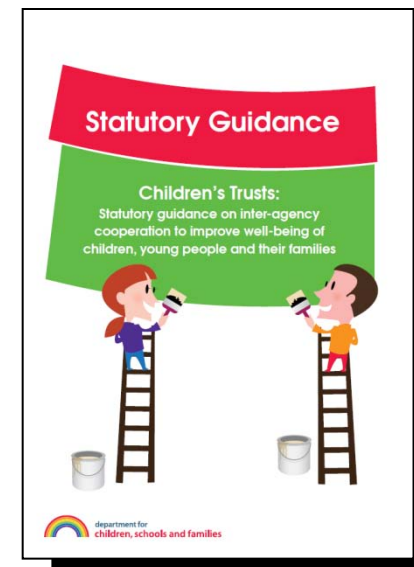


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What statutory guidance says about play – be healthy

- Requires local authorities to adopt a strategic approach to play across local areas.
- Need to involve children, local communities, and third sector in decision making.
- Work closely with wider Local Strategic Partnerships to promote more child friendly communities.

Children's Trusts: Statutory Guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families, DCSF, 2008



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Local context



Town Hall Park, Runcorn



Halton Borough Council

Secured £80k per year for at least 5 years from Halton and St.Helens Primary Care Trust to support the Playground Maintenance Team.



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Local context



Manchester City Council

Parktastic! is a three year play programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund. It offers free, open-access, adventurous play opportunities for children and young people to enjoy in local parks and green spaces.



Design for Play: A Practitioner's Guide



Photo: Nicola Butler

Aims

- Put play opportunities at the heart of the design process.
- Encourage design that allows children freedom to play creatively and experience risk .
- Dispel myths.
- Show that it is possible to design good play spaces which can be affordably maintained.

2008 Free Play Network, www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk
Commissioned by Play England



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Design for Play: A Practitioner's Guide



Ten Key Principles

1. Be designed for their site
2. Be well located
3. Make use of natural elements
4. Provide a wide range of play experiences
5. Be accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
6. Meet community needs
7. Have an element of flexibility built into the layout
8. Build in opportunities to take risks and challenges
9. Be sustainable, and appropriately maintained
10. Allow for change and evolution

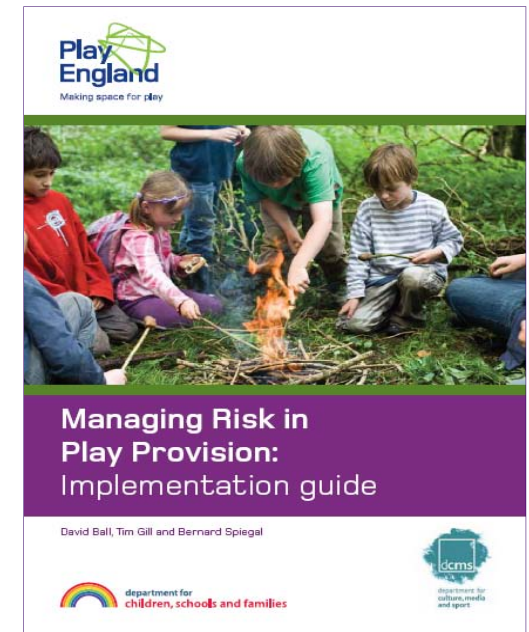


Managing Risk in Play Provision Implementation Guide



Aims

- To promote risk – benefit approach to managing risk.
- Encourage play areas that allow children to encounter and manage some risks for themselves.
- Provide toolkit for risk management process that allows provider to exercise informed judgment.
- Counter the 'risk averse' approach.



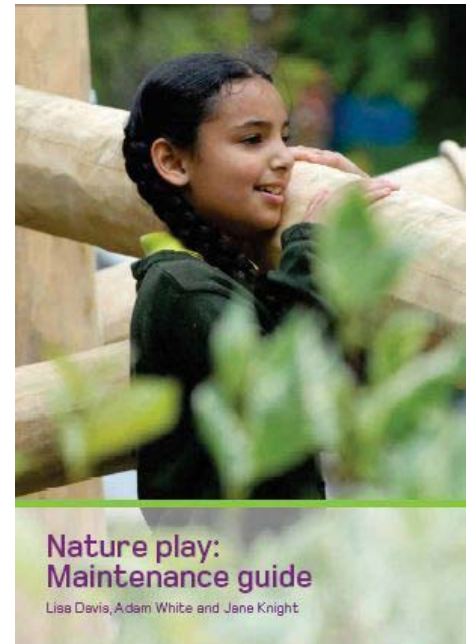
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Nature play: Maintenance guide



Aims

- To support those responsible for developing, delivering and maintaining natural play spaces.
- To support local authorities in introducing nature play into their play spaces.
- Highlights need to consider the management and maintenance implications.
- Identifies procedures to support the ongoing maintenance of play areas and ensure that consideration is given to ongoing revenue funding.



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Procuring quality play provision

‘To begin with questions about play equipment is to start in the wrong place.....The first questions must be: what should your place look and feel like, what sort of place do you want it to be and what do you want to do in it?’

(Melville, 2004)

Procuring quality play provision



Key questions:

- What do children and young people want?
- How are we going to get it?
- How are we going to get it on time and on budget?
- What goes wrong?
- What works?



Procuring quality play provision



Key steps:

- Start with the play partnership and play strategy
- join up the right people – processes - money
- revisit, renew and refresh consultation
- engage children and young people in design and development
- focus on play value, design led delivery
- decide your procurement mechanisms.



Procuring quality play provision



What goes wrong?

- too late
- not age appropriate
- not challenging
- too boring
- not robust
- too costly

What works?

- arrives before 31 March
- it's varied
- it's risky
- it's full
- it's still there
- it's play value



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Procuring quality play opportunities

- Framework contracts – Pro 5
- framework agreements.
- in-house or individualised contracts.
- third sector engagement.
- working across authorities to manage the markets.
- standardised contracts, consortiums, or ‘strategic partnering’.
- working collaboratively to achieve the outcomes.



Making space for play



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For more information, case studies and examples:



- **Embedding the play strategy**
www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters
- **Design, risk and maintenance guides**
www.playengland.org.uk/resources
- **How to involve children and young people in designing and developing play spaces**
www.participationworks.org.uk
- **Information, advice and support**
www.playengland.org.uk/northwest



What is Play Shaper?



Helping the professionals that plan, design, build and manage our communities to understand play and their role in creating more child-friendly communities.

www.playshaper.org.uk



The Play Strategy

Children, young people and their parents all recognise that play is a vital ingredient of a happy and healthy childhood.

Consultation:

- 72% of children and young people thought that plans to make more and safer areas for them to play in would make a positive difference to them.
- A majority of adults said that children aged 8-13 needed play areas with more exciting equipment that let them take risks.
- 91% of respondents believed concerns about being sued could lead to dull and unstimulating play areas.



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Play England is part of NCB and is supported by the Big Lottery Fund



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