

Community Toolkit



Developing and managing play spaces

January 2016

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Example Memorandum of Understanding

Example Risk-Benefit Assessment form

Play Space Audit tool

Routine Play Space Checks

Example Risk Management Policy

Example Expression of Interest Tender documents

Playing Out Questionnaire

Scoring sheet - Expression of Interest

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Community Toolkit

Who's it for?

The *Developing and Managing Play Spaces* community toolkit has been designed for anyone who takes responsibility for managing or developing a play space in a community. This may be a community council, local play association or a residents group.

Why has it been developed?

The Big Lottery Fund Fair Share Programme on Ynys Môn began in 2002 with a view to improving opportunities for children's play. Play Wales, working with the Community Foundation in Wales and the Fair Share Panel on Ynys Môn developed a project to improve play spaces.



As part of this Play Wales was funded to develop a community toolkit that fills a gap in support for groups that manage play areas, in order to ensure the development of quality play spaces that are accessible.

Developing and Managing Play Spaces is intended to provide a single source of support and signposting for community groups to navigate some of the challenges of managing or developing a play space.

How do I use it?

This toolkit is divided into two sections:

- 1 DESIGN** – focuses on new play space design and includes topics such as participation, procurement, design, health and safety.
- 2 MANAGEMENT** - focuses on the mechanics of managing an existing or newly built play space and includes topics such as maintenance and inspection, risk management and insurance.

See page 6 for a flow chart that will help with navigating this toolkit and the various stages of play space design and management.



What is it designed to do?

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

Guidance



is specific information intended to help understand a particular area of play space management or development.

Tools



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

Myth-buster

Classic play space myths will be addressed in boxes like this one.

Signposting

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



This toolkit can be used as a whole for the process of developing and managing a play space, alternatively, sections can be used independently to focus on aspects of the work. It is structured so that the information is in a logical order for stages of the design and management process. For example, participation and engagement comes before design, which in turn comes before procurement.

What policy or legislation supports this toolkit?

Children's Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out 54 articles that define how children and young people should be treated and how governments should monitor the UNCRC. The Welsh Government and UK Government have signed the convention. There are three articles in particular that are useful to consider when providing for children's play spaces:

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

National Play Policy

The Welsh Government demonstrated its commitment to children's play in the National Play Policy (2002). The Policy states that:

"play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live."

This recognition of the importance of play for society and communities underpins the content of this toolkit.

Health and Safety

The Play Safety Forum (PSF) and the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) joint high level statement promotes a balanced approach to managing risk in children's play.

The statement emphasises that when planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and the benefits - no child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool. The PSF and HSE urge all organisations to embrace the recommendations and principles in the statement: *Children's Play and Leisure: promoting a balanced approach*. This statement makes clear that:

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



Statutory Duties

In 2012 the National Assembly for Wales commenced new legislation under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 which places a statutory duty on every local authority to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children and young people in their areas.

Through the legislative framework made available to the Welsh Government by the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Child Poverty Act 2010 the government vision is to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

In its Child Poverty Strategy for Wales (2011), The Welsh Government recognises the right to play and its contribution to children's development and resilience. The strategy values play as being a vital element in children's development and that it can provide a strong protective factor in children's lives. The strategy highlights that play can, to an extent, shield children from the negative aspects of poverty and allow them to develop resilience to difficulties and uncertainties in their lives. Play contributes towards children's personal and social development, their physical and mental health, and their ability to learn and engage with education. There is recognition within this legislation and within the draft Child Poverty Strategy, that poverty of play experiences is a critical target area in addressing child poverty.

Participation

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

The National Participation Standards for Wales provide a basis of principles for involving children and young people in decision making. The standards explain what children and young people should expect when having their voices heard in relation to information, choice, non-discrimination, respect, benefits to children and young people, how children and young people receive feedback and how service providers improve quality.

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Play Space Development and Design

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Section 1 Play space audits

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

When looking to develop or refurbish a play space, being able to identify the areas or pieces of equipment that are most used and how they are used, will help to ensure that existing play opportunities are safeguarded and add value to what is already available.

A well-conducted play space audit also helps in other ways. Firstly, it forms part of the participation and engagement process and can help us gather evidence to support what the community and children are telling us. Secondly, conducted at regular intervals (for example six monthly) it can be used to help monitor how the space is being used and how often.

How to conduct a play space audit

The Play Space Audit tool on the following pages is intended for an observation that should take a minimum of 30 minutes. Ideally, observations should be undertaken during different times of the day to see how different age groups use the space. For example, undertake an observation during the weekend or after school and another during the day to observe pre-schoolers using the site with their parents or carers. Choosing when to undertake observations will depend on the site.

There are a number of play behaviours under the 'activity observed' heading – these are described in more detail below to help with the observation. There will be play behaviours that can be identified without needing to see children playing. For example, if children hang out on boulders or seated areas, there will be signs of wear from scuffing feet or holes dug with toes or sticks.

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

All children have different play needs and wishes that can change with time. Separating people into age and other groups is not necessarily beneficial (although some may need particular support to meet their own needs).

Interaction between all age groups and members of society is a vital process that supports all children and young people to feel more confident about playing out and hanging out. Building relationships with other children and young people gives an opportunity to share knowledge of the people and geography of neighbourhoods and to share lore. For example, traditions of playing, rules of games, places for play – an example of this could be an old lamppost which has been used for generations as the base when playing games such as hide and seek or *What's the time Mr Wolf?*

Understanding the audit tool

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

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

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



Use of natural features (e.g. trees, bushes, mounds, hills)

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

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

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

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

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

Risk and challenge (physical) – Are children experiencing increasing levels of challenge? This doesn't need to be high risk activity, it can be as simple as a toddler building up from jumping off the bottom rung of a ladder to the second and then the third. Where there are opportunities for children to take physical risks they will generally look for ways to

improve and increase the challenge. For example, a bike ramp made of bricks and planks of wood will have more bricks added as children's confidence grows.

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

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

Use of motorised vehicles/quads – Is the space used for this sort of activity?

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

ACTION PLANNING:

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

The second section of the action plan allows us to identify needs and actions from our observation that inform us how children and young people play and use the space. These observations can be used as evidence towards consultations. For more information refer to Section 3 on Participation and engagement.

PLAY SPACE AUDIT TOOL

Name of site:			Site observation made by:	
Site observations:	Observation day and date:	Observation period (e.g. half term/after school/during school day/weekend/evening):	Time of observation period:	Weather:
Key features of site:	Brief description of main features including access points (such as slopes, trees, shrubbery, vantage points, areas to hide, things to climb up or clamber over, seating and gathering points, level areas; as well as any manufactured play equipment features that may have been installed). Note any specific areas of usage shown, for example by worn grass, broken branches, bike tracks, litter, graffiti. These can be further detailed below in any activity observations made			
Usage by children and adults: (numbers)	Male:	Female:	Approx. age: (e.g. Under 5, 5-8, 8-13, 13-15, 15+)	Total:
Children/young people in a group:				
Solo children/young people:				
Accompanied by adults:				
Adult only:				
Activity observed by presence of children and young people:			If not present, record of signs of children and young people being there and making use of site:	
Walking, travelling through the space:				
Sitting, gathering, hanging out:				
Riding bikes, scooters, skateboards:				
Use of natural features (e.g. trees, bushes, mounds, hills):				
Playing with elements (water, earth [mud], fire, air):				
Use of senses (taste, smell, sight, sound, texture):				
Movement (e.g. running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling):				
Rough and tumble:				
Risk and challenge (physical):				
Playing with props/loose parts:				
Playing with identity:				
Use of motorised vehicles (e.g. motorbikes or quads):				
Dog walking:				

PLAY SPACE ACTION PLAN

Recommendations for developing and enhancing the site to increase ‘playability’, including any actions for protecting the way that children and young people are currently using the site, making reference to activities observed.

Actions for developing and enhancing playable space:	Actions for protecting playable space:
For example – Children are making use of the raised wooded area alongside the play space for building dens and playing tip. Access to this area is currently blocked by a wire fence that has been pushed down – explore formalising access to this space.	For example – The existing swings are in need of refurbishment but are extremely well used. Refurbish and incorporate into new space design. Consider more natural safety surfacing (sand or bark).

PLAY NEEDS ACTION PLAN

How do the observations contribute to evidence about what children/the community want?

Evidence of need	Actions
For example – Observations show that children enjoy climbing trees at the edge of the site.	For example – Ensure that design brief asks play designer to maintain access to the trees.



Section 2 Permissions

To develop a site it is essential to ensure appropriate permissions to use the land. If we do not already know the landowner we can contact the local authority and/or the Land Registry to find out.

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

We also need to establish who will take responsibility for maintaining the grounds and any equipment that is placed on it. See also Maintenance and inspection, Forming partnerships, Risk-benefit assessment tool sections of this toolkit.

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

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

Local Authority - scope for negotiating terms relating to leasing, insurance, maintenance.

Community Council - scope for negotiating terms relating to leasing, insurance, maintenance.

Ministry of Defence (MoD) – may be required to address how children living on the military base can make use of the play provision or whether/how community members access the site.

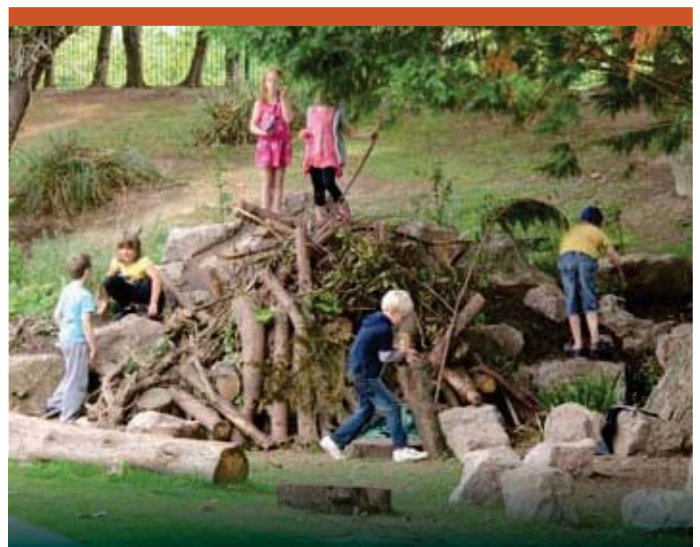
Farmers/Privately owned – arrangements with private landowners may be possible in some communities but it is recommended that legal advice is sought over responsibilities relating to insurance and maintenance in this instance.

Planning Applications, Land Searches, Surveys

Before proceeding with developments on the play space there may be additional paperwork that needs completing, some of which will cost money. The complexity and cost will largely depend on the size and location of the site and what we are planning to place on it.

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

For further information on landownership, planning applications, searches or surveys, refer to the Useful contacts on page 35.





Section 3 Participation and engagement

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

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

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

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

For further information refer to the contacts listed in Useful contacts on page 35.

Participation and Engagement Methods

Participation can happen in a number of ways:

Games, activities, workshops – Games and physical activities, art and craft activities, story telling, small group



discussions, drama, role play, puppets, one-to-one or peer interviewing.

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

Play Audits – Using the Play Space Audit tool provides evidence of how children already use a particular space. The action plan can be used to shape a plan based on evidence from observations as to how the space can be developed.

Building, planting, clearing – If there are elements of the play space that can be developed by the community, getting children and young people involved can help them shape the space and give them a feeling of ownership. Planting trees/bulbs, digging, painting, building and clearing rubbish are great ways of involving the community in the development of the play space and raising awareness of the developments being made. Children and young people may input their ideas during informal chat at community events – make sure there is a way of recording their ideas.

Blast Off! Guides

Participation Workers Network for Wales has produced a series of good practice guides on children and young people’s participation. They can be downloaded for free at:
<http://participationworkerswales.org.uk/resources.aspx>

Guide 6 *Working with Under 11’s* and Guide 7 *Ensuring Inclusion* – are the two that are most relevant for work relating to developing play spaces.

Allow for change as part of the design process –

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

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



Participation – Spice it Up!

is a publication developed by Dynamix and provides a range of games and workshops to run with children and young people to gather their views in a fun and inclusive way. www.dynamix.ltd.uk

Myth-buster

We should discourage teenagers in play spaces

If there are teenagers in the community and we are developing the play space, they will naturally be interested in it and want to hang out there. Design provision for teenagers into the space and get them involved in how it looks.

"I'm convinced that much vandalism happens because there is no provision for older children. So many people focus on toddler provision because they don't want to 'attract anti-social youths' that there is little to interest older children. In these circumstances it wouldn't be surprising if those older children felt alienated and disaffected with their community. We have a lot of anecdotal evidence that where more exciting provision is put in place for older children, vandalism reduces." (Collings, 2008)



PLAYING OUT QUESTIONNAIRE

School _____

Age _____

Name (Optional) _____

Where do you play? (Please tick all that apply)

Place	I'm allowed there on my own	I'm allowed there with friends	Only with an older brother or sister	Only with an adult	Not allowed to play there
Park/Play Area					
Beach					
Woods					
By the river					
Town/village centre					

What do you play with or would like to play with? (Please circle all that apply)

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

What stops you playing out? (Please circle all that apply)

Not allowed out	Homework	Weather	Too dark	Bullies
Older children	Other grown ups	Not allowed to get muddy	Nothing to play with	Nobody to play with
Dog mess	Too busy playing Xbox/PS3/Wii/DS	It's hard to cross the road	Too busy with other clubs and activities	I don't like getting wet or muddy

Please pick the MOST important things you would like for us to change at the _____ play space

(Circle ONE from each column)

Play Equipment	Natural Space	Other
Swings	Rocks and boulders	Safe crossing on the road to the park
Slide	Hills	Talk to grown ups who tell us not to play there
Roundabout	Trees	Make dog walkers pick up dog mess
Bike/skate ramps	Den building area	Help us deal with bullies
Climbing frame	Mud pit	
Sand pit	Water	

Please use the box below to write or draw anything else you would like us to know:



Section 4 Forming partnerships

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

Below is a list showing the types of people you may be seeking to work in partnership with:

- Children and young people
- Residents groups
- Community Councils
- Members of the community
- Local play associations
- Other community groups
- Local authority officers
- Housing associations
- Play/landscape designers
- Schools
- Religious groups

Establishing a group

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

Skills

Look at the skills in the group. Are there any gaps in knowledge that may require specialist help? It may be necessary to ask for support to address certain skills gaps. Those listed in the Useful contacts on page 35 may be able to help.



Writing down roles and responsibilities

We need to consider who will take direct responsibility for elements of the design and development process and the longer term management and maintenance. These can be defined in a document called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the partners involved.

An example MOU is provided on the next page, which can be adapted to meet our needs. It may be necessary to develop two MOU's – one for the design and development stage and a second for management and maintenance as the roles and individuals involved may be different.

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

Myth-buster

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

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

EXAMPLE Memorandum of Understanding – _____ Playable Space

Introduction

This project is funded by _____

The aim of the project is to develop and maintain a community play space in the area of _____ that is suitable and accessible for children and young people in the community.

(Insert site name and address)

Purpose of Memorandum of Understanding

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

The role of the partnership is to support the maintenance regime/design and development of _____ playable space to ensure that the space is able to continue to support and be effective at meeting children and young people's play needs. Through making risk-benefit assessments, any unnecessary hazards that may arise will be minimised by supporting the required actions needed to do so, including making checks, repairs, and environmental modifications. The members of the group have made a commitment to contribute to an environment of openness, active participation and understanding of the specific needs of each organisation and area.

Parties making the agreement

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

Methods of working

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

Roles and responsibilities

Organisation – Who?	Role – What?	Responsibility

Declaration

We the undersigned agree to the arrangements in this document.

Signed _____

Date _____



Section 5 Play space design principles

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

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

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

(*Design for Play*, 2009)



Design for Play

There is detailed guidance on the process of designing play spaces in Play England's publication *Design for Play*. This can be downloaded free at: www.playengland.org.uk/resources/design-for-play

The 10 Design Principles

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

are bespoke

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

are well located

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

make use of natural elements

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

provide a wide range of play experiences

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

are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children

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

meet community needs

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

allow children of different ages to play together

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





Section 5 Play space design principles

build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge

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

are sustainable and appropriately maintained

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

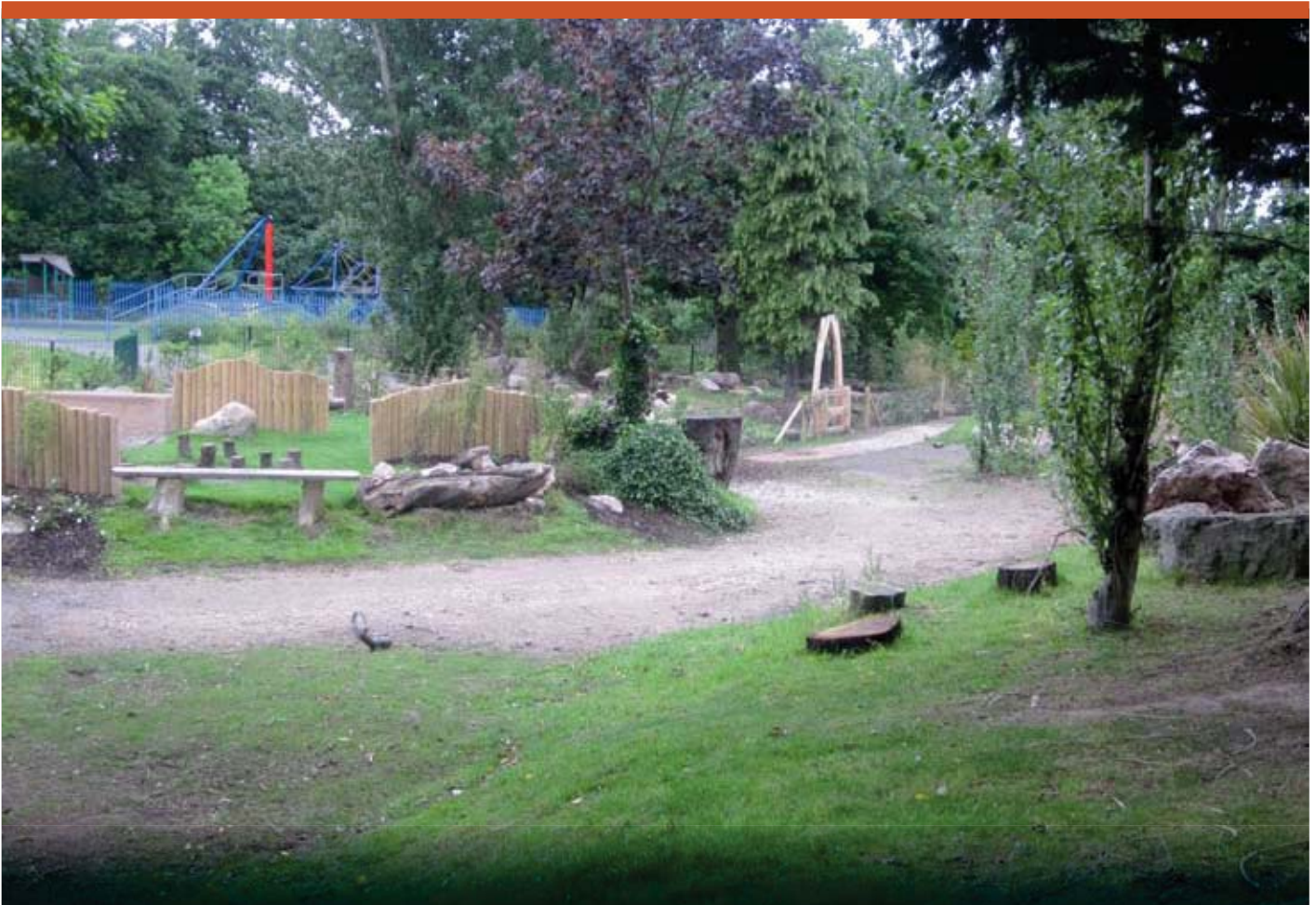
allow for change and evolution

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

Myth-buster

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

It is not compulsory to put any kind of fence around a play space. The reasons for choosing to include a fence or other boundary include: the provision is for very young children and there are dangers if children run off the site; to discourage dogs from the site; the provision is very close to a main road or deep water. However, young children are likely to be supervised by adults. Generally children will be enticed away from a site because of other features outside of the boundary so make the play area as enticing as it's surroundings. If choosing to place a boundary around the play space, select features that blend with the surroundings or more playable options. These include: wooden fencing, dry stone walls, walls that can be climbed and hedgerows.





Section 6 Principles of inclusive play space design

When developing a play space consider the needs of children in the community who will, or may in the future, be using the play space. This means we need to think how children who have a range of impairments can access the play opportunities provided.

Remember that wheelchair accessibility is an important factor but that the space should be accessible to a broader range of children too. For example, purchasing an expensive wheelchair roundabout will allow children who use wheelchairs to experience the roundabout but take into account some practical considerations:

- What proportion of our budget would one piece of specialist equipment cost – could we purchase several smaller items that provide a range of opportunities at the same cost?
- Do we want to segregate children to pieces of specialist equipment?
- Do we know if there are currently any wheelchair users in the community who would make regular use of such a feature?
- Do we only want to provide **one** play opportunity for children who use wheelchairs or would we rather have several non-specific items that can be used in a number of different ways by wheelchair users and non-wheelchair users?

Remember that purchasing items that can be used by more than one child means that the child can be supported by a parent, carer or personal assistant. Also, 'inclusion' is a social term – it is essential to ensure access to the social experience of playing with and around other children, not necessarily to every piece of equipment.

Below is a list of examples of traditional equipment and natural features that can be included in a play area that offer play opportunities to a wide range of children.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Myth-buster

Sand causes problems with cats and dogs

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



Section 7 European standards

(Extracts from *Managing Risk in Play Provision*, Play England, 2008)

Myth-buster

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

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

There is no specific legislation on play safety in the UK, and undertaking a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment is the primary legal requirement. There are agreed Europe-wide industry standards that should always be considered when carrying out a risk assessment although compliance with standards is not a legal requirement.

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

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

The key standards for play spaces are:

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

Find out more about compliance with European standards from your registered playground inspector or briefings are available on The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents' (RoSPA) website: www.rospace.com

PLAYLINK – Legal Opinion

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

It stated that

"the proper approach to British or European standards is not to regard them as laying down a compulsory standard to be followed slavishly in all cases, but as a guideline demonstrating the general consensus as to what would constitute sensible precautions in any given case." It continued: "If a rational process of risk assessment, together with a balance of cost, risk and benefit can justify departure, then there would be no failure to exercise reasonable care." (PLAYLINK, 2006)

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An implementation Guide

This Play England publication was developed to provide detailed guidance on legal requirements and approaches to conducting risk assessments of play spaces. In particular, spaces that include play features that do not have a European standard such as natural features.

The guide is available to download for free at: www.playengland.org.uk/resources/managing-risk-in-play-provision-implementation-guide.aspx



Section 8 Impact Absorbing Surfaces (IAS)

Provision of impact absorbing surfaces (IAS) is covered by European standard BS EN 1177.

Myth-buster

Grass is not a suitable safety surface

According to The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) grass is an acceptable surface, subject to a risk assessment, for a fall height up to 1,500mm in the UK.

Synthetic surfaces – there are three main types:

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

Assessing for surfacing

PROVISION UNDER OLD EQUIPMENT

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

- Compliance with standards
- Play value
- Site position, design and use
- Age of equipment
- Foot-print

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

PROVISION UNDER NEW EQUIPMENT

All new equipment should be provided with an appropriate surface. Under 600mm high this does not need to have an IAS, but should have some impact attenuation. In some cases (e.g. spring items) ground protection may be required. Grass re-enforcement materials can be used.

PURCHASING SURFACES

It is recommended that suppliers provide assurance that their product has been tested in accordance with BS7188 and EN1177. It should be installed to the areas given in EN1176. Copies of appropriate test certificates should be supplied on request. Obtain written assurance that the material will maintain its absorbency levels for the warranty period. On-site testing is available, see RoSPA's website for details – www.rospace.com (source RoSPA).

The legal position

There is no legal requirement for IAS to be provided on children's playgrounds. It is, however, recommended by safety organisations such as RoSPA, the British Standards Institution (BSI), National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT). The Department of the Environment 'strongly recommended' its use in 1978 while the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, currently the UK Government's lead body on playgrounds) advised its use in their Playground Safety Guidelines (1993) as one of the design elements of a safe playground. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has also recommended it.

Recent out-of-court settlements arising from playground accidents have suggested the courts recognise that the provision of suitable surfaces represents good practice, especially under new equipment.

Accident Prevention

Undoubtedly, head injuries to children are reduced in severity by the provision of IAS but such falls are a rare occurrence for children over five. IAS will not reduce accidents but may reduce the severity of injury from falls to the playground surface – that is about 50 percent of injuries resulting in a hospital visit. There is some evidence that it will not reduce long-bone fractures, especially of the upper body. About 30 percent of fall injuries are related to equipment. Surfacing is only of limited significance to accidents and its provision should be viewed in perspective.

Types of Surfacing

As a general principle there are three main types of IAS for play areas:

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

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

Myth-buster

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

Rubber safety surfacing is only one kind of impact absorbing surface (IAS) which is often expensive, requiring specialist equipment to lay. Other valid forms of IAS include grass and loose-fill materials such as sand and bark. These surfaces require a more structured inspection and maintenance regime but also provide additional play value. www.rospace.com/leisuresafety/adviceandinformation/playsafety/loose-impact-attenuating-surfaces.aspx



Section 9 Procurement – the tendering process

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

Community Council/Play Association identifies a need for extensive work to be undertaken (landscape design, building work, installation of equipment)

Development of a tender brief outlining the requirements of the work, budget range and skills needed

Expressions of interest (this step can be skipped) – if expecting a number of interested applicants, ask for an initial expression of interest (one to two sides of A4) from applicants before shortlisting to the next step

Invitation to tender – asking interested parties to submit a detailed tender based on the requirements set out in the tender brief

Receipt of detailed tenders with costings, timescales and project plan

Interview two to three shortlisted applicants before agreeing on which company/person to appoint

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

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



Kingsbeard Community Play Association

Design Tender

Expression of Interest

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

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

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

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

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

At this stage we require up to two sides of A4 describing your approach to developing natural play settings, your experience in this field (with examples and photos if possible), your understanding of what a play setting aims to achieve and your scale of charges. Please specify if you have any experience in bringing designs to reality and understand the context of planning permissions, land searches and surveys.

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

Expressions of interest should be sent by _____ to:

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

For more information please contact:
chair@kingsbeardplay.org 07777 654321

Kingsbeard Community Play Association

Development Tender

Expression of Interest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Completed tenders should be sent by _____ to:

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

For more information please contact:
chair@kingsbeardplay.org 07777 654321

Procurement Policies

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

Procurement thresholds set out by the Welsh Government are available on their website and public sector bodies (such as Local Authorities) need to advertise their tender opportunities on the Sell 2 Wales website if the project exceeds the threshold – www.sell2wales.com

Scoring potential candidates

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

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

Below is a sample template that can be used to help with the scoring process. Note that there is a column to weight the answers in order of importance.

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



Section 10 Funding

To develop or refurbish a play space it is necessary to identify adequate funding for the project. This section provides some considerations when identifying funding. For further advice and guidance on fundraising or for an overview of local and national funding sources contact your County Voluntary Council (see Useful contacts on page 35).

There are a number of ways to raise funds:

Grant Funding – If we have little experience of completing funding applications refer to Useful contacts on page 35 for contacts who may be able to assist. Grants require completing an application process which can take between a few weeks to several months to receive a decision depending on the size of the grant. Upon successfully being awarded a grant it will be necessary to complete a report to the funder to explain how the money has been used and account for expenditure.

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

Community Council Funding – Community Councils can allocate money towards community projects including play space projects. However, it is unlikely they will pay for a whole development. Consider how regular contributions can help with ongoing maintenance.

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

Slow Development

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

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

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

Running Costs, Maintenance and Inspection

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

Value Added Tax (VAT)

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





Play Space Management

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Section 11 Risk management

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

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

Risk-Benefit Assessment

Risk-benefit assessment is an approach to risk assessment that also takes into account the benefit to the child of having access to a particular risk. This is a rational consideration in children's play provision.

For example: the risks associated with a climbing frame are slips and falls from the equipment. The controls we might put in place to minimise risks are impact absorbing surfaces (IAS), not have freefall heights above a certain measurement and ensuring there are adequate hand and footholds.

But **why** would we let children climb to height anyway? This is where benefits apply. Likely benefits include: building physical strength, balance and co-ordination; children learning to assess risks for themselves and experiencing feelings of excitement.

Building risk-benefit assessment into our risk management approach shows that we have considered all these factors, which increase the playability of the play space.

A draft risk management policy

Below is a fictional risk management policy that can be adapted for our own use. The policy sets out the risk-benefit approach to managing risks and allows us to input our own procedures, for example frequency of inspections and routine maintenance programme. Having a risk management policy goes beyond requirements for conducting a risk assessment, to give a robust framework for how organisations manage risks over time and use the knowledge gained to update and improve operational (paper-based) risk assessments.

Kingsbeard Community Play Association

Risk Management Policy

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

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

The policy is supported by the following statement issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in 2005:

"Sensible health and safety is about managing risks, not eliminating them all. HSE is not in the business of stamping out simple pleasures wherever they appear and at whatever cost. We recognise the benefits to children's development of play, which necessarily

involves some risk, and this shouldn't be sacrificed in the unachievable goal of absolute safety."

Risk Management Systems

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

Providing for risk and challenge in play provision

Kingsbeard Community Play Association recognises that childhood is full of new experiences, which necessarily involve some degree of risk taking, whether it be physical



or emotional. Childhood is a continuous process of trial and error with the potential for achievement, but also the inevitability of accidents. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving risk of injury.

We have a duty of care to try and protect individuals accessing our services and facilities from the potentially, long-term, damaging effects of being exposed to serious and *unreasonable* physical and emotional harm. However in doing this we must not overlook, or seek it at the expense of, also enabling children to actively participate in their own personal development of health, wellbeing and resilience, as a result of engaging in situations with uncertain outcomes.

Risk-Benefit Assessment

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

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

Reasonable Controls

During the risk-benefit process it may be necessary to identify control measures in order to reduce risk of injury to an acceptable level. However, the control measures

that can reasonably be implemented will depend on the resources available. The cost of any potential control measures must be justified by being proportional to the risk of injury involved.

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

Site Checks and Technical Inspections

On unstaffed play sites intermittent checks can be made to identify and manage hazards. However, the frequency of these checks will depend on what can reasonably be achieved given the resources available, the type of facility and its location.



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

Type of check	Frequency	Notes
Annual Technical inspection	Yearly	Conducted by Register of Play Inspectors International (RPii) inspector
Full paper based risk-benefit assessment	Six monthly	
Routine inspection	Weekly	All equipment checked, surrounding area check, all natural elements checked, any issues recorded to feed into six monthly risk-benefit assessment
Routine inspection	Daily	Visual equipment check, litter pick
Routine maintenance	Weekly	Litter pick, rake sand, check for dangerous objects
Mow grass	Monthly during growing season	Leave area nearest trees to grow wild

Summary

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





Section 12 Risk-benefit assessment tool

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

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

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

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

It builds on the guidance document *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide* (2nd edition), published in 2013 by the Play Safety Forum with Play England, Play Wales, Play Scotland and PlayBoard Northern Ireland.

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





Section 13 Insurance

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

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

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

Due to the amount of choice that is available, it may be useful to speak with other groups that manage play areas to find out about their experiences with particular companies. The County Play Officer will be able to provide contact details for other groups if necessary. (See Useful contacts on page 35).

Myth-buster

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

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



Section 14 Signage

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

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

Signage Contents

Play area signage should include:

- Name of operator of the site
- Contact details to report damage or accidents. Where the authority has a permanent office this should include the telephone number. Where a clerk works from home including a telephone number may not be appropriate
- Location of nearest public telephone for contacting emergency services (Not essential)
- Pictogram "No Dogs" signs are also strongly recommended
- Where there are overhead electric cables nearby "No Kite Flying" signs are recommended
- Where a play area is near a road the use of Road Signs to warn motorists of the presence of a playground should be considered (contact the local Highways Authority for provision of these).

Signage should also be welcoming and child-friendly. If possible work with local children to design signage that reflects the community and the children who live there. Note that many funders are very happy to see their logos appearing on signs as acknowledgement.

Myth-buster

Graffiti is a sign of vandalism

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



Section 15 Maintenance and inspection

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

It may be that we have made an agreement with the Community Council or the Local Authority regarding maintenance and inspection. If this is the case, refer to Section 4 – Forming Partnerships where a Memorandum of Understanding template that can be adapted to meet our needs is provided.

Post-Installation Inspections – These are usually made a condition of a contract with the supplier/installer to ensure the play space is fit for use before handover. They ensure that all equipment has been correctly installed and make recommendations on compliance with standards. As with annual inspections, these need to be conducted by a professionally competent independent playground inspector.

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

Arrange an annual inspection through a professionally competent independent playground inspector. The Register of Playground Inspectors International (RPii) maintains a list of qualified inspectors – www.playinspectors.com

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

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

Training is available in how to properly conduct routine inspections. For advice contact the County Play Officer or RoSPA. (See Useful contacts on page 35).

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



It is sensible to have a programme of routine inspection that is either covered by the organisation or contracted out.

Maintenance Considerations – A regular programme of maintenance will be required for the play space. How this is arranged will depend on the local situation. Below are factors to take into account in relation to maintenance.

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

Myth-buster

We should discourage other adults in play spaces

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

ROUTINE PLAY SPACE CHECKS

Name of Play Area:

Frequency of Check (Daily/Weekly):

[illegible]

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

- 1 = little or no litter, no damage
2 = some litter, signs of regular use and wear
3 = Moderate litter, some removal of dangerous objects
4 = Significant litter and/or damage
5 = Signs of very heavy use, lots of litter, dangerous objects to remove, significant regular maintenance needed

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



Section 16 Planning policy and guidance

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

Planning Policy Wales (2002)

Planning Policy Wales (2002) sets out the Welsh Government policy on development plans in each Local Authority area. Since 2005 Local Authorities are required to develop Local Development Plans (LDP's). Development plans are intended to provide a basis for rational and consistent decisions on planning applications and appeals. The LDP system aims to reduce the amount of time spent on plan preparation by engaging with relevant interest groups at an early stage and ensuring they remain involved throughout the process.

FIT (Fields in Trust) Cymru Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (2008)

Formerly the National Play Fields Association (NPFA), Fields in Trust (FIT), provides advice and guidance relating to planning and planning policy that affect space for outdoor play and recreation. Their '6-Acre Standard' has been used as a benchmark for planning play and recreational space since the 1930s.

Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play, is the latest version of their guidance that covers the whole of the UK; there is a specific supplement that covers the slightly different policy context here in Wales.

The 6-Acre Standard suggests that for each 1000 residents there should be 2.4 hectares (6 acres) for outdoor sport and play as follows:

- 1.6 hectares (4 acres) for outdoor sport and recreation space (including parks)
- 0.8 hectares (2 acres) for children's play, with about 0.25 hectares of this for equipped playgrounds

It also categorises play space into the following types:

LAP's – Local Areas for Play

LEAP's – Local Equipped Area for Play

NEAP's – Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play

Section 106 Agreements

Section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act enables a planning obligation to be entered into by agreement between a developer and the local planning authority. Very often the

provision of a playground on sites proposed for new housing developments is such a planning obligation. This presents an opportunity for funding to be made available for the development of play areas where new residential areas are being built.

Technical Advice Note 16 (TAN 16) Open Space Assessments

As stated above, Planning Policy Wales provides the strategic policy framework for Local Development Plans. This is then supplemented by 20 topic based technical advice notes (TAN's).

TAN 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space states:

"While formal, equipped play areas provide opportunities, particularly for young children within communities, these are not the only forms of provision which should be offered. Wheeled play areas, ball game areas, 'playable space', community woodland and informal areas for 'environmental play' can provide opportunities for children to interact and gain the social, health and well-being benefits which come from opportunities for active physical play."

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

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

Furthermore, TAN 16 states that some Authorities may choose to use the FIT Cymru benchmark (6-Acre Standard) but that they may also develop standards that more closely fit the local circumstances.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Contact	Support	Details
Local Authority Play Officer/Service	Funding, risk management, playwork provision	www.wlga.gov.uk/english/authorities
Families Information Service	Participation, funding, activities, childcare, information for families	http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/familyinformationservices/?lang=en
County Voluntary Council	Funding, support for voluntary organisations	www.wcva.org.uk/funding
Planning and Environment	Information on planning process	www.wlga.gov.uk/english/authorities
Environmental Health	Dog Fouling	www.wlga.gov.uk/english/authorities
RPii - Register of Playground Inspectors International	Find a playground inspector	www.playinspectors.com
RoSPA – Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	Online briefings, training and advice	www.rospace.com
Parks Department	Information on parks and open spaces	www.wlga.gov.uk/english/authorities
One Voice Wales	Support and representation for town and community councils	www.onevoicewales.org.uk
Sustainable Funding Cymru	Funding advice	www.wcva.org.uk/funding
Play Wales	Design advice, risk management and information regarding regional play associations	www.playwales.org.uk

REFERENCES

Children's Play and Leisure: promoting a balanced approach (Health and Safety Executive, 2012)

Conwy & Wrexham Risk Management Framework: Policy, Routine and Dynamic Risk-Benefit Assessment (Conwy and Wrexham Risk Management Group, 2010)

Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces (Play England, 2008)

Fair Share Business Plan 2010 - 2012 (Play Wales/Community Foundation in Wales)

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide (Play England, 2008)

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide (Play Safety Forum, 2013)

Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (FIT Cymru, 2008)

Play Area Surfacing (RoSPA, 2004)

Risk-Benefit Assessment Form (Play Safety Forum, 2014)

Signs for Play Areas (RoSPA, 2004)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.unicef.org/crc)

Wales: A Play Friendly Country - Statutory Guidance (Welsh Government, 2014)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PHOTOS

Hanwell Playscape, West London
Canolfan Tu Fewn Tu Allan, Colwyn Bay
Maes Martin Play Area, Llanfechell, Ynys Môn
Queen Elizabeth II Play Park, Thomas Close, Beaumaris, Ynys Môn
National Playday and Play in the Parks provision, Conwy Play Development

