Play England

Making space for play

Design for Play:
A guide to creating successful play spaces

Aileen Shackell, Nicola Butler, Phil Doyle and David Ball

department for children, schools and families

dcms department for culture, media and sport

Aileen Shackell
Aileen Shackell is a landscape architect with over 15 years' experience working in parks and open spaces, many of which have included play areas. She has worked in both the private sector and for the environmental charity Groundwork and now runs her own landscape practice.

Nicola Butler
Nicola Butler is the Director of the Free Play Network, a network of individuals and organisations that aim to promote the need for better play opportunities for children. She is co-author of the online photo exhibitions, *Places of Woe: Places of Possibility and Places for Play*. Nicola has also developed the Free Play Network's online discussion forums, addressing current issues affecting children's play.

Phil Doyle
Phil Doyle has over 30 years' experience in the local authority and voluntary sectors developing play opportunities for children and young people in a wide range of settings. Phil has extensive experience of community engagement and involvement on public play spaces. He has practical experience of initiating and project managing the development and design of play spaces and has a real understanding of the maintenance implications of designed schemes. He was previously the local authority representative for the Local Government Association on the Play Safety Forum.

David Ball
David Ball is Professor of Risk Management and Director of the Centre for Decision Analysis and Risk Management at Middlesex University. David first became involved with child safety issues in 1986 when working at the Greater London Council. His interest in this subject has continued throughout, and has resulted in major publications on the topic, for example, *Playgrounds – risks, benefits and choices*, published by the Health and Safety Executive in 2002. David also has lengthy experience with risk issues in general including the legal process.

Free Play Network
The Free Play Network is a charity dedicated to improving children's opportunities for outdoor play. The Network has more information on designing for play, including innovative examples of play space design on its website at www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk.

Play England
Play England aims for all children and young people in England to have regular access and opportunity for free, inclusive, local play provision and play space. Play England provides advice and support to promote good practice, and works to ensure that the importance of play is recognised by policy makers, planners and the public. For further information visit www.playengland.org.uk

CABE Space
CABE is the Government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space. CABE Space is the specialist unit that aims to bring excellence to the design, management and maintenance of parks and public space in our towns and cities. For more information, visit www.cabe.org.uk.

Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces

Contents

Endorsements

Health and Safety Executive

HSE commends the application of sensible health and safety management principles to the provision of children's play, and recognises the importance of enabling innovation and learning through recreational and learning activities where the risks are managed. We are pleased to endorse the approach to risk management suggested in *Design for Play*.

Barry Baker
HM Principal Inspector of Health and Safety Entertainment and Leisure Sector HSE

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

RoSPA believes that the *Design For Play* document provides an important guide to enable designers to make exciting and challenging environments in which our children can play. Through a better interaction with the world around them children will learn valuable life skills.

David Yearley
Head of Play Safety RoSPA

Foreword by Kevin Brennan MP and Gerry Sutcliffe MP

Play should be at the heart of children's everyday lives and experiences throughout childhood. We want children to enjoy a healthy balance of structured and unstructured play in their leisure time.

Children enjoy playing and prefer to be outside, but opportunities to do this are falling. Through our Children's Plan consultation and *Fair Play - A consultation on the play strategy* (DCSF, 2008a) we know that parents and children want more opportunities to play safely close to where they live. They want a variety of places to play and to be consulted and involved in the development of attractive, exciting and welcoming places.

The Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007a) announced a record programme of investment of £235 million in play over three years 2008 – 2011. Exciting new play areas in every local authority in England will be developed with this funding.

Play space needs to be of high quality and good design to attract children and families and become a valued part of the local environment. Poor quality, unimaginative space will not be attractive to children, will not be valued by the local community and will fall in to disuse and disrepair. Good design is a good investment.

Safety is an issue for parents and children. This is often a barrier to encouraging outdoor play, so we want play space that helps children play safely and to encourage parents to let their children play outside. *Design for Play* makes a valuable contribution to delivering our cross government *Staying Safe Action Plan* (DCSF, 2008c) and Public Service Agreement to 'improve children and young people's safety'. This is a wide-ranging programme of work improving safety in all aspects of children's lives. This guidance strikes the right balance between providing safe play and allowing children to learn about managing risk. By experiencing risk in this way, children and young people will learn about keeping themselves safe, not just whilst playing but in other aspects of their lives.

Design for Play sets out the principles for creating imaginative, innovative, and stimulating play spaces that will enrich the lives of children and young people. We look forward to seeing it inspire commissioners and designers as they work with communities to transform their local play offers.

Kevin Brennan MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families

Gerry Sutcliffe MP
Minister for Sport

Foreword by Adrian Voce
Director of Play England

By a range of measures, there is growing evidence that children in England spend less time enjoying outdoor play than at any point in our modern history. Addressing this problem will not be simple. The barriers are many and complex.

This is acknowledged by the Government's decision to develop a national play strategy, led by two different departments and coordinated with policy objectives from a number of others. *The Children's Plan* (DCSF, 2007a) and subsequent play strategy consultation, *Fair Play* (DCSF, 2008a), places children's play at the centre of one of the great policy challenges of our time. That challenge is how better to recognise and respond to children and young people as stakeholders and users of public space.

Children's well-being, safety, learning and social development, as well as their essential enjoyment of childhood, are affected by the extent and the quality of their opportunities to play. By the same token, the cooperation of many different professionals and roles is needed to ensure a cohesive and effective approach. Council officers and members, children's services professionals, planners, developers, architects, housing managers, landscape architects and designers, play equipment suppliers, parks and recreation managers, community groups, health professionals and, of course, play practitioners, are just some of the people who have, or should have, an interest in promoting enjoyable play spaces that feel safe for children and young people.

Planning for Play: Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy (Children's Play Council, 2006), set out a recommended framework and process for these and other partners to work together to produce area-wide plans as the basis for allocated funding from the Big Lottery Fund's Children's Play programme. Play partnerships in the vast majority of district and unitary authorities have completed that work, so that almost every area of England now has a cohesive play strategy and funding to begin implementing it.

The Government's new play pathfinder and playbuilder funding announced in *The Children's Plan* and allocated to top tier authorities, should ensure that the momentum for expanded and improved provision continues. This groundswell of strategic planning for play should link with other plans and funding streams, such as the local youth strategy and the *myplace* investment programme. The measures in *Fair Play* are also designed to ensure that local play strategies are adopted and firmly embedded within the wider top-tier plans and strategies for our cities and counties: coordinated within the overall vision of *The Children's Plan* to create joined up children's services and child-friendly environments that genuinely place children at the heart of their communities.

But if the barriers to outdoor play are complex, one thing is clear: dedicated play areas, and any spaces that would offer children somewhere to play, need to appeal to children, respond to their needs and sustain their engagement over time if they are to fulfil their purpose.

This guide, which we are very pleased to jointly publish with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), is to help those charged with investing in play provision to aim high by taking a step back from the sometimes limiting stereotype of a public playground. The guide is aspirational, aiming to inspire, not to prescribe. Its premise is that, like any other part of the public realm that is intended to be well used, well loved and well maintained, play space needs a coherent concept and a clear design. The principles that are recommended to inform this design are based on well-researched findings about what constitutes a good play environment. Because this research tells us that children like to play throughout whatever domain is accessible to them, it argues that play space should be integrated sensitively into the wider design of the public realm.

Much public play space currently relies primarily on the design and installation of manufactured play equipment. Much of this is high quality in terms of play value, but a lot of it is not and seems to be based on a narrow view of how children play. A lot of play equipment is designed with a primary focus on safety, offering little opportunity for play that offers risk and challenge. Equally, avoiding wear and tear often appears to be a bigger priority than user enjoyment.

The point of this guide is not to abandon the use of manufactured play equipment. On the contrary, the efforts to repopulate our public spaces with playing children, of which this guide is a part, should see a growth in demand for all aspects of play provision over years to come. We do, however, aim to encourage commissions that use equipment creatively, and with a keen understanding of the different ways that children need play. In this approach, equipment, where it is used (and good play space is not always dependent on it) is part of the overall design, rather than the sole feature. Landscaping, planting and community art installations, for example, can offer children as much play value as apparatus. A combination of these, complementing one another within the overall design for an area, can cultivate a greater sense of place, allow children the fullest play experiences, and reap huge benefits for them, their families and the wider community.

Section 1: Background

Sunny summer evening, Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground.

Introduction

This guide is, primarily, for commissioners and designers of children's play areas. It is non-statutory guidance to 'playbuilder' local authorities under the capital-spending programme launched by DCSF in April 2008. This programme, integral to the Government's new national play strategy, has allocated an average of £1.1m to every top tier local authority in England and the Department 'expects playbuilders to demonstrate best practice in innovative design and production of play sites and to be mindful of this guidance when undertaking their capital investment' (DCSF, 2008b). The guidance is intended to support good practice in the development and improvement of public play space. It is not intended as a strict set of criteria for the capital programme, but to present guiding principles, suggested approaches and to inspire innovative and creative ideas.

The guide is also intended to inform the creation of outdoor play space for years to come, that does justice to children's endless capacity for adventure and imagination, their fundamental need for exercise and social interaction and, above all, to their innate sense of fun. It is also aimed at those responsible for the wider public realm, and aims to show that well-used and well-loved places to play will often be integrated within the cohesive design of a wider community space. Places where children play can be important social places, not just for children and young people, but also for parents, carers and the wider community. They should be places where children and young people can enjoy spending time, be physically active, interact with their natural surroundings, experience change and continuity, take risks in an environment where they feel safe and, of course, play – alone or with others – in a wide variety of ways.

These places, in both rural and urban areas, might include residential streets, town and city squares, playgrounds in parks and other open spaces; woods and commons; recreation grounds or public spaces on housing estates – anywhere that play is a legitimate use of the space. This guide focuses on un-staffed play provision. However many of the lessons learned are equally applicable to staffed sites, such as adventure playgrounds and schools.

This guide will help those involved in commissioning and designing places for play to put play value at the heart of provision. It shows how to design good play spaces, which can be affordably maintained, which give children and young people the freedom to play creatively, and yet still allow them to experience risk, challenge and excitement. It sets out a new approach, tackles some current myths, and aims to challenge providers to think more laterally and creatively about children and young people in the public domain.

For some, the ideas and aspirations in this guide may, at first, seem unrealistic and unattainable. It aims to show, however, that, with imagination, planning and an understanding of children's needs, it is possible to create and maintain exciting play areas for children and young people of different ages, sometimes by making only small changes to existing provision. It also aims to provide the ideas and the practical resources for building new play areas in a fresher and more inspiring way than is common practice at present.

1 In addition to the playbuilder funding, 30 local authorities will also be awarded play pathfinder status and additional funding for a range of other measures. This guidance does not address these additional measures.

Chapter 1:
Inspiring play

What is play?

Children play in many different ways according to their own interests and abilities, and enjoy different forms of play at different times and places. Approximately 15 different play types have been identified, all of which are of importance to children's enjoyment and day-to-day experience. (Children's Play Council, National Playing Fields Association and PLAYLINK, 2000).

Play is about more than just 'letting off steam'; it can be quiet and contemplative, as well as active and boisterous.

All children and young people, including those who are disabled or have specific needs, should have opportunities to experience challenge and take risks while playing.

Play is essential to the healthy development of children and young people – not just their physical development, but their social and cognitive development too.

Play is what children and young people do in their own time, for their own reasons. When playing, children choose what to do, how to do it and who to do it with. Play takes many forms: doing nothing in particular; doing lots; being boisterous; showing off; being contemplative; being alone; being social; being challenged; being thwarted; overcoming difficulties. Through play, children explore the world and learn to take responsibility for their own choices.

Playing allows children to develop a sense of well-being, develops their emotional responses and improves their interpersonal skills. It involves exploration and creativity, helping children think in a flexible manner, developing the creative process, language skills, and learning and problem solving skills.
(DCSF: 2008a)

Play can take many different forms.

The importance of risk taking in play

Risk taking and challenge have an especially important role in children's play and development. From a very young age children often use play to test their own limits or to repeat skills until they have mastered them.

Children use play to test limits.

We should not prevent children and young people from doing things they enjoy because of risks that can be managed. Children and young people themselves recognise that 'you can't make everything safe' and that a balance is needed between risks and fun. Children recognise that knowing about risks and how to manage them is an essential part of growing up.
(DCSF: 2007b)

As they grow and develop, children seek out different types of challenge and risk in their play, and providers need to understand and account for this in the play opportunities they are offering. This can be addressed by combining guidance from agreed Europe-wide industry standards with local, policy-based, risk-benefit assessment. This process is described in detail in the *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide* (DCSF and Play England, 2008).

Children of all ages need risk and challenge in their play.

Where children play

As Play England's *Charter for Children's Play* states:

Children should be able to play freely in their local areas. Children have the same right to use and enjoy public space as others. Local streets, estates, green spaces, parks and town centres should be accessible for children and young people to move around in safety and offer places where they can play freely, experience nature, explore their environment and be with their friends.
(Play England, 2007a)

Wherever they live, all children and young people should have easy access to spaces and facilities where they can play freely, and free of charge, coming and going as they please. Whilst the provision of designated play spaces is very important to children so is their opportunity to play in other public open spaces. Providing better access to and management of the public realm is as important as the provision of play areas. Children play wherever the opportunity arises and they need more opportunities to do so. 'Children being seen and heard in shared public spaces is the hallmark of a vital community' (Free Play Network and PLAYLINK, 2006).

The benefits of a good public realm for children and young people are part of the benefits it gives the rest of society. When it functions well, public space is a free shared resource for all to draw on, a realm for everyday sociability, and a safe setting for face-to-face interaction between strangers.
(Beunderman, Hannon and Bradwell, 2007)

Children benefit in particular from being able to play in natural environments. They tend to be more active, and evidence suggests that contact with natural environments supports positive mental health (Sustainable Development Commission, 2007; Lester and Maudsley, 2007).

Why play matters

Play is essential to children and young people's physical, social and cognitive development. Outdoor play is particularly valuable as it provides unique opportunities to experience the elements and because of the sense of well-being and enjoyment that being outdoors can bring. Access to the outdoors also gives children more space to move freely and run around.

Play spaces also have particular social value for parents and carers of young children, as places for both adults and children to meet informally, taking away some of the pressure of individual childcare responsibilities.

Research suggests that children playing outdoors and establishing relationships with other children in their community can also have a positive effect on community cohesion. The more social networks children have in a neighbourhood, the greater the confidence parents have in the safety of that area. Parents also establish their own networks through their children, meaning that play also supports community cohesion amongst adults. In Finland, over 70 per cent of parents saw their play park to be somewhere where they can get support and help with issues concerning their children.
(DCSF: 2008a)

© Frode Svane

Better places for play

Today's children and young people generally have fewer opportunities for outdoor play than previous generations. Increasing traffic levels, concerns about risk, and negative attitudes towards young people are amongst the many factors that have led to children and young people having fewer opportunities to play out. An ICM survey commissioned for Playday 2007 shows that 71 per cent of adults played outside in the street or area close to their homes every day when they were children, compared with only 21 per cent of children today (Play England, 2007b).

In 2007, the American Academy of Pediatrics reported that, while children's free time has been reduced in recent decades, childhood and adolescent depression has been on the increase over the same period. As the report noted, free, child-driven creative play 'offers benefits that may be protective against the effects of pressure and stress' (Ginsburg, 2007).

Many of the open space strategies developed by local authorities have demonstrated that provision for teenagers across the UK is particularly limited. Often deemed too old for 'play', teenagers need more than youth shelters and areas for ball games. More places where they can congregate and socialise with their friends are especially important.

Policies for play

The importance of play is reflected in a growing body of policy documents that support children's right to play.

The right to play is set out in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government in December 1991, and in the UK five outcomes for all children's services defined in *Every Child Matters*: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being. In December 2007, *The Children's Plan* (DCSF, 2007a), set out plans for major Government investment in children's play allocating £235 million to local authorities to improve their provision of designated play spaces. *Fair Play: A consultation on the play strategy* (DCSF, 2008a), creates a framework for this expenditure and makes proposals for sustaining and embedding play provision as a local service.

Play England, established in 2006 to promote strategies for free play and support local authorities in developing play strategies, aims to create a lasting support structure for play providers in England. Almost all unitary and district local authorities across England have now developed play strategies to enhance knowledge and understanding of play, to raise its profile, and to ensure that a consideration of children's need to play becomes part of the strategic policy framework for all decisions that affect children's lives.

The challenge for play providers is to provide the best possible play opportunities, and to create play spaces which will attract children, capture their imagination and give them scope to play in new, more exciting, and more creative ways.

Chapter 2:
Inspiring play spaces

Creating inspiring play spaces that will please, excite, challenge and satisfy children requires knowledge of play, technical skill, an understanding of children and, above all, imagination.

The 10 principles for designing successful play spaces

Successful play spaces...

- are 'bespoke'
- are well located
- make use of natural elements
- provide a wide range of play experiences
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
- meet community needs
- allow children of different ages to play together
- build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained
- allow for change and evolution.

Understanding play

Ask any adult to recall their best play memories. These were almost always outside – often in natural surroundings – with friends; exciting, social, creative experiences often high in anticipation. Ask the same adults if their children can play in the same way today and silence falls. But today's children should have access to just as wide a range of play opportunities as their parents had. Creating spaces where children can play freely and which offer them experiences they might remember for the rest of their lives, requires careful thought and imaginative design.

At first glance, some of the ideas in this guide may seem, to those who commission play spaces, unusual and possibly challenging. However, once providers recognise and acknowledge the potential benefits to children and communities, and free their imaginations, they will be able to think, design and commission more creatively.

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.

Although play spaces like these are often used and enjoyed by children across the UK, in many areas these same children have little access to other places for outdoor play or to the natural environment, spend little time outdoors in the fresh air 'doing their own thing', and have little independence in how they experience the world outside their homes.

Typical play space in Germany: informal layout, loose-fill surfacing and unfenced boundary.

Children and young people need to be made more welcome in the public domain, but with so many factors now restricting their access to the outdoors, it is becoming all the more essential that their play spaces provide a far wider range of play activities and environments than they have in the past. A growing number of people in the UK are therefore taking a new approach to the design of play spaces, in many cases inspired by schemes in continental Europe, where imaginative play space design is frequently seen.

> **Whilst thankfully we recognise that children need so much more than a diet of chicken nuggets and twizzlers, equally the same can be said for a 'play diet' that is restricted to a concoction of springy chickens and twisters… If we are to really improve the quality of play opportunities, we also need to provide children with access to more natural and creative play settings that help stimulate the senses and encourage greater use of the imagination.**
> **(Packard, 2007)**

The primary aim of designing a play space must be to offer children a rich play environment where they can have a wide variety of play experiences and, where possible, learn about the natural environment.

Successful play spaces offer movement and physical activity with space and features that allow a range of energetic and strength building play experiences.

© Play England

© Nicola Butler

Successful play spaces stimulate the five senses maybe providing access to music and sound, and different smells made by plants and leaves.

© Play England

Successful play spaces are good places for social interactions allowing children to choose whether and when to play alone or with others, to negotiate, cooperate, compete and resolve conflicts.

© Play England

Successful play spaces allow children to manipulate natural and fabricated materials, use tools, and have access to bits and pieces of all kinds.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Successful play spaces offer children challenge and activities that test the limits of their capabilities, including rough and tumble, sports and games, and opportunities to climb.
(Hughes, 1996)

Creating inspiring places for play

Creating natural and imaginative play settings requires, for many, a fresh design-led approach to commissioning, based on 10 principles, encapsulated in one golden rule.

The golden rule

A successful play space is a place in its own right, specially designed for its location, in such a way as to provide as much play value as possible.

The 10 principles underlying this design–led approach depend on all those involved being able to imagine a play space that children will seek out, enjoy and return to – remembering their time there for years to come.

1: Imagine a play space designed to enhance its setting

Successful play spaces are designed to fit their surroundings and enhance the local environment, complementing attractive spaces and enhancing poorer environments. Early in the process, designers need to visit and survey the site to identify features that can be built into the design. Knowledge of the local area and its history will provide inspiration.

> **When designing play spaces for children there is one thing, apart from economics, which is essential and that is genius loci, the spirit of the place; in other words the qualities and the atmosphere already present. This can be a part of a building, a tree with character, something that happened at the place, an old sculpture or something else. Genius loci is an important starting point and can be the approach to decide the design of a new space. (Nebelong, 2002)**

In rural areas, locally occurring materials and geographical features can be used to add play value. In **Balmaha Play Landscape**, the naturally hilly slopes were retained as an important feature of the final layout, along with the rounded granite boulders and the long grasses and ferns which are all found naturally in the area.

Balmaha Play Landscape.

Even in an urban area, designing a play area to fit its context can create a more attractive place. **Milton Keynes Bus Station Skate Park** is a good example of a scheme that has been sensitively designed so as to be well integrated within the urban streetscape. The skate park uses a carefully selected palette of construction materials, which complements the surrounding townscape.

Milton Keynes Skate Park.

2: Imagine a play space in the best possible place

Successful play spaces are located carefully 'to be where children would play naturally' (Wheway, 2007) and away from dangerous roads, noise and pollution. No matter how well designed a play space is, in the wrong location it will be neither used nor usable. While children often enjoy feeling as if they are away from adult oversight, there is a fine balance between a space that is pleasantly secluded and one that is remote and hidden away.

Play areas located on natural through-routes and by well-used public footpaths work particularly well. In **Allens Gardens** the main footpath forms a central spine to the park and encourages people through, although the site itself is relatively tucked-away behind housing. Either side of the path the gardens are subdivided by the densely planted shrubs and trees into a series of smaller, almost secret, spaces. There is a good balance between feeling that there are likely to be people walking through – making it feel less isolated – and still feeling as though you can hide away in a secluded corner.

© Nicola Butler

Allens Gardens Play Area.

3: Imagine a play space close to nature

Many studies have shown that children benefit from access to natural environments (Lester and Maudsley, 2006). Grassy mounds, planting, logs, and boulders can all help to make a more attractive and playable setting for equipment, and planting can also help attract birds and other wildlife to literally bring the play space alive. In densely populated urban areas with little or no natural or green space, this more natural approach can help soften the hard urban landscape, and it is also beneficial in rural areas where children can often have very limited access to natural features and materials.

In **Chapelfield Play Area** a previously level site on the edge of the village and backing onto farmland was transformed into a playable and playful arrangement of mounds, ditches and hollows, inspired by the archaeological history of the site. The new changes in ground levels provide numerous opportunities for exploring, climbing, hiding and chasing – play activities that are often seen on the site.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Chapelfield Play Area.

4: Imagine a play space where children can play in different ways

Successful play spaces can be used in different ways by children and young people of different ages and interests; they can also be important social spaces for parents and carers, as well as for children. Fundamental to this concept is the idea of non-prescriptive play equipment and features, which put play in the control of children and encourage imagination and creativity.

At **Trefusis Playing Field** several pieces of play equipment allow for all the conventional types of active play. However, these are located in a carefully designed setting to create a space that is deliberately non-prescriptive in terms of its use, allowing for the many other different types of play, such as creative, social and dramatic play. Elements with no defined function have also deliberately been included, such as a curved concrete structure, which can be a surface for skateboards, a seat, or even a wall for smaller children to run along.

Trefusis Playing Field.

5: Imagine a play space where disabled and non-disabled children play together

Successful play spaces offer enjoyable play experiences to disabled children and young people, and to those who are non-disabled, whilst accepting that not all elements of the play space can be accessible to everyone. Children with different abilities can play together in well-designed play spaces, and parents and carers who are themselves disabled should be able to gain access to play spaces if they are to accompany their children.

Though many play providers focus on equipment that is wheelchair-accessible, it is important to recognise that there are many different types of disability or special need. Non-prescriptive equipment, which can be used flexibly – such as a 'nest' swing – might be interesting to large numbers of children with different needs and abilities.

The **Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground** in Kensington Gardens, London, is a play area where disabled and non-disabled children can play alongside each other. Wheelchair accessible high-level walkways are accessible from a smooth surfaced path, which also connects the various areas of loose-fill surfacing (sand and play bark). The sandy surfaces are accessible to wheelchair-users, with assistance, and once in the sand children with very differing needs and abilities play together.

Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground.

6: Imagine a play space loved by the community

The process of creating successful play spaces, that meet the needs of children and the communities they live in, will almost always need prospective users (and neighbours of the scheme) to articulate their concerns as well as their needs and aspirations. A successful community engagement process will help create a site that the community likes and which meets its needs.

At **Cutsyke Play Forest**, West Yorkshire, the contractor designed and developed a play feature consisting of six-metre poles, a platform, slides and netting that could be built into a 'play forest'. At Cutsyke, the highest platform intended for climbing is 4 metres above the ground, whilst the standard requires the highest supporting position to be no greater than 3 metres. In addition, children on this platform are exposed to the possibility of falling. The risk assessment made the judgement that the benefits to children's play experience were sufficiently great, and the likelihood of a child falling sufficiently small, to allow the platform to be built.

The play forest was developed in close co-operation with the local community who use the site extensively and obviously feel proud that their small village features such an unusual and exciting play space.

Cutsyke Play Forest.

7: Imagine a play space where children of all ages play together

Good play spaces avoid segregating children on the basis of age or ability, and are laid out so that equipment and features can be used by a wide range of children, even allowing different patterns of usage throughout the day or week.

At **Wyvis Street Play Space**, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the tyre swing is used by children of all ages, from older teenagers to very young children, with assistance from their parents. And even the sandpit area, which was designed more with very young children in mind, attracts much older ones who enjoy sitting round it with their friends.

Wyvis Street Play Space.

8: Imagine a play space where children can stretch and challenge themselves in every way

Children and young people need opportunities to experience challenge and excitement in their play.

> **Children need to take risks to learn how to manage risks. This is an essential part of growing up, and play is one of the most important ways in which they develop this vital skill. Riding a bicycle, climbing a scramble net, or pushing a friend on a swing all involve risk. It is essential that we do not try and remove all the risk from play or wrap children in cotton wool. (DCSF: 2008a)**

At the **Climbing Forest** in Coombe Abbey Country Park, the client worked with the contractor to design and build a network of climbing posts and nets set within an area of mature woodland. With climbing and fall heights ranging from as little as 150mm above ground level to as much as over 3m above the bark chip surface below, the installation provides an exciting experience for children and young people of all ages, even including young adults in their 20s.

© Timberplay

Coombe Abbey Country Park.

9: Imagine a play space maintained for play value and environmental sustainability

Good play spaces are designed and constructed using recycled or sustainably sourced materials. Long-term maintenance and sustainability are also vitally important considerations in the design process, but in successful play spaces do not overshadow the scheme's play value and ability to meet the play needs of children and young people. Good play spaces are designed and constructed bearing in mind sustainability but they are not necessarily tidy, and bits of scrub or long grass, fallen leaves and twigs, may all provide additional play opportunities.

At **Horsham Park** in Horsham, West Sussex, the play space contains a variety of different types of surfacing, including an extensive area of sand, which is immensely popular. In this slightly exposed location, the sand tends to drift out of the area immediately around the equipment. Rather than constantly tidying it up, the park manager has concluded that the larger area of sand that results might as well be left, as this larger sandy surface provides even more play value than was originally intended.

© Aileen Shackell

Horsham Park.

10: Imagine a play space that evolves as the children grow

Play spaces benefit from a process of ongoing change and refurbishment. This is especially important because children grow up and change fast whilst the fixed equipment in their local play space tends to stay the same. Building some 'slack space' into the layout – space with no predefined function – can help introduce potential for change and evolution. Play areas that have every corner defined, so there is nowhere for children to invent their own play activities, can become dull very quickly, especially as children get older.

In unfenced play spaces, such as **Dilkes Park** in Thurrock, the flexible layout means that extension of the play space is relatively unconstrained. Here, the equipment is seamlessly integrated with its woodland setting and there is no sense of where the play space begins and ends, making it feel far more inviting to explore than a more conventional fenced layout.

Dilkes Park.

Everyone can imagine a great place to play – the skill is in turning the image into reality, using the 10 design principles. It is the people who commission play spaces for local authorities and other organisations, and those who manage and direct them, who hold the key to this transformation.

Section 2:
Designing for play

Chapter 3: Designing places for play

Chapter 4: Making other spaces more 'playable'

Balmaha Play Landscape

Chapter 3: Designing places for play

Successful play spaces are located and designed with reference to their surroundings. Play equipment and features are chosen for the way they can complement and enhance their setting as well as for their play value.

This chapter sets out the importance of a holistic approach to designing for play, thinking about the setting, features and potential use of equipment together from the outset, and considers how to design both new and refurbished play spaces that complement their surroundings.

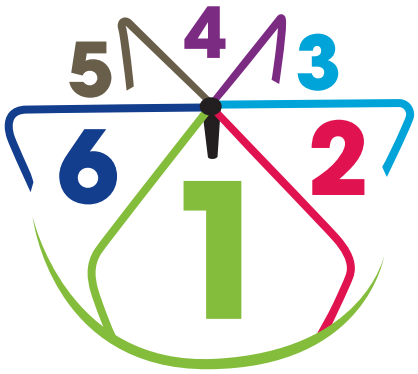
The play space design cycle

Designing for play is an ongoing process. Successful play spaces are not simply ordered from a catalogue, put in the ground and left. They require careful thought and planning, continuing care and maintenance, and should be reviewed and updated periodically to make sure they provide the best possible play opportunities for children and young people. Care must also be taken to ensure that services and facilities designed to cater for children's current needs do not undermine their long-term well-being by failing to consider the environmental impact of initiatives.

Across the UK there are many playgrounds of similar age that are now in need of refurbishment. These playgrounds may include equipment that is reaching the end of its design life or is in poor repair, or they may no longer be in places where children want to play. Many children will not have access to new play areas so the challenge for providers is to make existing facilities better by investing in and improving their design and play value, using the 10 design principles, in order to offer larger numbers of children and young people access to both improved and well-designed play areas.

Following the six stages of the design cycle will help create successful new-build and refurbished or upgraded play spaces.

Design cycle – stage 1: Prepare



Preparation and planning are essential to the long-term success of play spaces. Careful consideration must be given to location; play spaces in hidden and inaccessible places will not be well used by children, and are most likely to be vandalised.

Planning must also consider the type of provision that is needed locally and the abilities which need to be catered for. Demographic analysis can help indicate whether children of particular age ranges are predominant locally, but in a densely built-up urban area where space is limited, play spaces which can appeal to children of a broad range of ages and abilities may be the most feasible solution.

It is not necessary to be prescriptive about usage – a play space aimed at teenagers can sometimes be very attractive to and usable by much younger children when the teenagers are not around, and vice versa. Wyvis Street Play Space is a good example of a 'doorstep' play space where the same play features are used by different age groups throughout the day. However larger sites which serve a wider area can more easily offer a wider range of elements for a variety of age groups and abilities.

More and better quality provision is also urgently required specifically for older children and teenagers, who have their own distinct needs, so this is likely to be a high priority in many areas. Ball games areas and wheel parks are the most common forms of teenage provision but these tend to cater less well for girls. Cowley Teenage Space has achieved a successful balance between active ball and wheeled play and the quieter social spaces which are appealing to both sexes.

Questions on preparation

Where are there gaps in existing provision?

How are you evaluating existing provision?

How will you involve local people – could you set up a project steering group?

Do you need planning permission?

If you are working on a refurbishment, have you checked the location is acceptable before investing in improvements? How accessible is it?

What are the priorities for the type of facility to develop?

What liaison will be necessary with the transport department?

Taking a strategic approach

The best play spaces are carefully conceived and designed. It is not possible to develop and build a scheme overnight, and rushing at the development stage may cause problems further down the line when it could be more expensive to make changes. It is worth spending time also to gain the interest and trust of local people, which will promote participation in planning and ownership of the site, once completed.

All changes in provision should be part of the strategic development for play provision across an area, informed and underpinned by an agreed play policy as described in *Planning for Play* (Children's Play Council, 2006). The play policy should provide a framework for deciding types and locations of provision, and explain the context for decisions about opportunities for children to experience risk and challenge in their play.

A strategic approach to local provision will be more achievable with an appropriate and well-resourced organisational structure. At Stirling Council, the Play Services team encompasses all those in the council who have a remit covering play, from play development officers, through to maintenance operatives, see Appendix 3 for more information on this.

Fields in Trust (formerly National Playing Fields Association) are revising the guidance on play space (previously known as the Six-Acre Standard). The guidance takes a systematic approach to assessing gaps in provision by categorising play spaces along the lines of their size and primary function. Each category of space is allocated a catchment area, based on set distances that children would be expected to travel to reach the different sizes of play space. This approach is regularly used by planners to identify where the areas of deficiency lie. Its value can be enhanced if it is complemented by local consultation, observations of children's play and other methods of survey and analysis.

Looking at local provision

Play areas must be developed in the context of other provision available to children and young people in the neighbourhood. An audit of existing provision, and consultation with the local community, are essential, to identify gaps in provision, and what types of play spaces are required.

New play spaces are often created by developers seeking to fulfil Section 106 or 'planning gain' obligations. These should be located with regard to areas of deficiency (and designed following the same principles as if they were being implemented by the local authority). The same funding could be made available to upgrade existing facilities, especially where lack of space means that no sites for new facilities are available.

The plan here shows catchment areas for different sizes of play space; the areas beyond these are categorised as areas of deficiency. Open space strategies prepared to meet the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 17 (CLG, 2002) and play strategies developed as part of the Big Lottery Fund Children's Play initiative, can all provide useful baseline information.

Play space evaluation

A play space can only be successfully developed or re-designed if all those involved and affected understand the strengths and weaknesses of the existing space. Where new play areas are to be created, an understanding of the local neighbourhood and where children are likely to want to play, is essential. There are a range of techniques and tools available for the evaluation of play spaces and this guide advocates comprehensive and holistic evaluation.

Play England's *Play Indicators Quality Assessment Tool* (Play England, 2008), has been developed to help play providers assess location, play value and care and maintenance of existing play spaces. This tool focuses on an inspection approach and is designed for use by everyone, from play professionals to those who have little or no specialist knowledge.

The tool provides a useful starting-point for reviewing play space by different stakeholders but should be accompanied by qualitative evaluation and observation of how the spaces are used and experienced. Local knowledge, observation and site visits, and an understanding of what makes a good play space all have an essential role to play in assessing sites.

Good evaluation involves observing the play space in use, preferably over a period of time. This cannot be a quick 'tick-box' exercise.

Study of one of my sites revealed that the expensive bridge unit was not the real focus for play, it was the spinning item on the end!
(Coleman, 2007)

One example of a holistic approach to play space evaluation is the **Upton Play Appraisal**, which used a combination of household questionnaires, public events, a youth council, and workshops in schools to identify where children in the village felt unsafe and where they enjoyed playing, and to map pedestrian routes between key locations. Recommendations for where to site new facilities could then be developed based on this knowledge (Groundwork Wakefield, 2007-10).

Upton Play Appraisal, undertaken in Castleford, West Yorkshire, in 2006.

Once a commitment has been made to develop a play space and resources have been found to do so, there are a number of tools that can help clarify priorities for action. One such tool is Spaceshaper, developed by CABE Space, which assesses the quality of a public space by bringing those who use a space together with those who manage it. CABE Space is working with partners to develop a version of the tool for children and young people. For more information see www.cabe.org.uk/spaceshaper.

Engage and involve the community

The success of a play area depends on how well it meets the needs of local children and adults. If the play area is near housing or in a well-used public space, many people will be affected. Making sure that everyone with an interest is involved from the early stages will increase the chances of a successful development.

At **Cowley Teenage Space** in the London Borough of Lambeth residents of all ages from the Cowley Estate worked together to develop the initial ideas for the teenage space. Artists running the consultation brought in objects which were used by residents to make temporary three-dimensional structures, which led directly to the construction of permanent structures around the edge of the new ball games area, providing new places to sit and 'hang out', and to cycle over.

Cowley Teenage Space.

The objective of community engagement is not only to gather information about prospective users' needs, but to ensure that local people are happy with the outcome and are committed to its long-term maintenance and survival. Experience of more successful schemes suggests that active involvement of local people throughout the design cycle is a more useful approach than only asking for views in the early stages.

The *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit* (Children's Play Council, 2006), a CD-ROM from the National Children's Bureau, gives detailed information on consulting with people in local communities and extensive information on developing play areas.

It is not unusual for communities to be hostile to the idea of new play spaces. In this situation, taking time to explore concerns is essential. Differing local views can de-rail a project, unless the commissioner and designer are prepared to make a serious attempt to confront and negotiate over them, and ultimately they may have to take a strong line to preserve the integrity of the design concept. A frank and open process of engagement with the community may not avoid disagreements, but should have the effect of showing the process to have been fair.

Identifying someone within the group to take a leadership role and act as a project advocate will also be very helpful.

Steering groups

All projects require leadership and management. The person responsible for commissioning the space will need to harness the skills and expertise of others. Where time and funds allow this might involve creating a project steering group.

A project steering group should include the designer, someone who will be involved in maintenance, someone involved in procurement, and representatives from the local community. It is important to involve maintenance officers at an early stage so they understand that the prime reason for play spaces is for children's play and that the play environment should not be dictated or reduced by concerns about maintenance requirements. The project steering group should include someone with detailed knowledge of health and safety issues and insurance. If traffic calming is required then involvement of transport and planning colleagues at an early stage is vital.

More information about setting up and supporting a steering group can be found in the *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit*.

Planning permission

Many local authorities allow play areas to be constructed without planning permission, except for structures over a certain height. Others require planning applications for all new play spaces, especially those involving a change of land use. It is advisable to discuss the scheme with a local authority development control officer at an early stage to establish whether a planning application is necessary.

It is common during the consultation and notification stage of the planning application for the local community to voice concerns about proposals for a new play space, so it is important to inform and enthuse people at the earliest opportunity. Sometimes consultations can be dominated by very vocal residents, opposed to the play space. The commissioner and designer need strength of purpose to listen and respond to negative views but not lose sight of the overall objective.

Securing funding

Access to information about on-going funding sources is essential to the long-term sustainability of any successful play space. If there is a project steering group it may include someone responsible for exploring funding possibilities. There are different local authority budgets that might be able to support play space development, including budgets for tree works, planting, maintenance, environmental improvements, health and safety, Section 106 funding and landfill tax. For schemes to succeed, there must be enough money for capital, consultation, design and running costs.

Funding often becomes available towards the end of the financial year at very short notice. Rather than rush proposals for new or refurbished play spaces, or lose the funding due to lack of time, aim to have some 'on the shelf' projects, ready to be taken forward at short notice.

Considering the location

The most important factor in the success of a play area is its location. A successful location is one where children want to play, where they feel safe at the play area as well as whilst travelling to and from it, and where they can play without being stopped or criticised by adults.

Invermead Close Playable Space in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is designed as a shared communal space. It is located adjacent to housing, providing an informal place where local children can 'play out' by themselves close to home.

This new play space at Invermead Close makes good use of previously under-used space on this housing estate.

At **Milton Keynes Skate Park**, the choice of the old bus station in the centre of town as the location for the skate park contrasts with the common assumption that these facilities should be as far away as possible from adults and buildings. Here there are people coming and going all day, helping to create a place where young people feel secure.

Milton Keynes Skate Park.

There are a number of things to consider when making decisions about location.

1. Develop doorstep provision

One way of filling gaps in play provision in built-up areas is to create more doorstep spaces designed for multi-functional use, which children and young people are most likely to be able to access themselves (and avoiding physical barriers such as busy roads).

Open space on housing estates is often the only space that is readily accessible to children and young people who live there, and there may be scope to provide for play in a way that does not compromise other residents' needs.

2. Choose a location that children can get to easily

Younger children, in particular, need places near their homes where they can play freely and where they and their parents can walk to with ease. As they get older and more independent it is essential for all children to have access to play spaces they can reach by foot and bicycle; this may require investment in safe, attractive pedestrian and cycle routes to help overcome parental fears about road traffic.

3. Make sure the location is accessible to disabled people

There is much relevant design guidance available on the width, gradient and surface treatment of external paths and other features, which should be used to ensure that children and parents with mobility impairments are not excluded from play spaces. It is important too to maintain elements of challenge. *Developing Accessible Play Space – a good practice guide* (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003), is a useful source of further Information.

The publication *Inclusion by Design* (Goodridge, ed. Douch, 2008), contains useful guidance on how to make play facilities as accessible as possible to all children, disabled and non-disabled.

4. Choose a location with informal oversight

The degree to which the play area needs to be overlooked will depend on the individual site but in general play provision is best placed close to other facilities where there are usually people about. Two key criteria for locating successful play spaces are that children want to 'see and be seen' and 'be where it's at' (Wheway and Millward, 1997).

Sometimes children also want to feel that they can escape from the adult eye. At **Allens Gardens**, dense tree and shrub planting creates a series of secret spaces in which small play sculptures and single items of equipment have been informally located. Children are able to play just out of sight, but still feel that there are adults close by.

Allens Gardens.

5. Locate play spaces near other facilities

Locating play spaces beside community facilities, such as libraries, adds value to these facilities and can increase usage of the play space. In larger parks or open spaces, it can be helpful to locate play spaces close to cafés or toilets, which help bring people into the park and make it feel safer and more sociable.

6. Play spaces in unsuitable locations

The experience of the refurbishment schemes reviewed in this guide suggests that there is almost always something that can be done to an existing play space to improve it. However, a play space that is really in the wrong location will not be used by children, and is unlikely to be worth investing in. User surveys can help to establish how well a play space is being used, and whether people are happy with it.

> **We moved one play area to a new site a few hundred metres away when it was discovered that the old location was not liked by users.**
> **(Coleman, 2007)**

If there really is no other suitable space for a play area in the neighbourhood, then it is essential to discuss ways to make the space more satisfactory with local children and parents before decommissioning it.

Clarifying the type of play space needed

Auditing and mapping of current provision, and consultation with the local community, can identify the sort of play opportunities needed, and age groups to be prioritised.

Designing for flexible use

Designers of play spaces should focus on providing for abilities, rather than on ages. Through careful design, play spaces can include elements for both younger and older children, without being prescriptive about who uses what. Some pieces of equipment can even be used by children of a wide range of ages and abilities.

In some situations, a space which is designed to be used very flexibly with 'lower-key' activities is more appropriate; for instance, at Wyvis Street both the tyre swing and the sandpit area are used by children of a wide range of ages, at different times of the day.

Through careful design, play spaces can include elements for younger and older children – without being prescriptive about who uses what – and also include some elements that cater for all ages and abilities. The **Climbing Forest** at Coombe Abbey Country Park is a good example of equipment that can be used by young children with assistance, through to young adults.

Co-operative play is a particular feature of the Climbing Forest at Coombe Abbey Country Park.

Other sites – particularly larger play spaces with more of a focus on equipment – are more likely to contain areas which are targeted towards children with different abilities.

The importance of providing 'ability appropriate equipment' is illustrated very clearly with regard to the issue of supervision. Younger or less able children are more likely to require a level of interaction with supervisors whilst playing, and for this reason the playable height of structures is usually restricted to 2m, allowing for easy assistance if necessary; however older children who can play without adult assistance would not find such low structures sufficiently challenging.

Whilst being prescriptive about usage by children of specific age groups is not necessary, spaces need to be carefully designed if they are to be used by a range of ages together, as younger children can feel intimidated by older users who are playing and interacting at a higher level.

Comfortable seating and shelter should also be included for parents and carers to encourage them to relax, linger and allow their children to play for extended periods if they want. These considerations should be a part of any play space designed to attract younger children, and will help create better social spaces. Toilets are also useful to include on larger sites.

It is important to think carefully about the use of fencing, which is often installed partly to keep out dogs. Parents with young children may value fencing around play areas, but older children may be discouraged from usage, and assume that the fenced area is not for them. The treatment of the boundary to a play space is an important design issue, which needs careful consideration; a boundary hedge, perhaps some mounding, or no demarcated boundary at all, may work better in some locations.

Wyvis Street Play Space is unfenced so people are free to use it without feeling restricted in any way; the seating area next to the sandpit is used by people of all ages. Dog walkers continue to use the site, and fouling has ceased to be a problem since a local campaign to 'scoop the poop' resulted in a few well-publicised convictions of persistent offenders.

Though spaces that cater for multiple age use are preferable, a lack of good quality provision throughout the UK for older children and teenagers means that facilities for this age group are badly needed. Teenagers need more social places in their local areas that they can get to by themselves, where they are welcome to congregate with their friends, and where they can have access to more challenging play opportunities.

Perhaps one of the most important factors in teenage provision is the need for an attitudinal change to young people, and a far greater recognition of their right to occupy the public domain.

Teenage provision tends to be dominated by wheeled play and ball games areas. Though popular, these areas are almost exclusively used by boys. Careful design will open these facilities up to both boys and girls, such as at Cowley Teenage Space, where the ball games area was refurbished to include different types of seating around the edges, so creating a variety of social spaces for everyone to use, alongside features for wheeled play.

'Hang-out' shelters are also widely used. These work best when sensitively located, close to other facilities, rather than being placed in isolated or exposed positions where they – and the occupants – can be overly conspicuous. Shelters designed with the young people who will use them can be particularly successful. At Spacemakers the shelter design was a result of close co-operation between the young people, the designer, and the metal-worker, with the final cost being comparable with off the peg versions.

At **Mast House Terrace** a new youth space has been created next to a busy street corner and close to housing. It provides space for all sorts of wheeled play and is seen as being a cool place to meet friends and skate or play ball games. Being located in a public area it enlivens the local street scene.

Design cycle – stage 2: Design

The design-led approach to play space development described in this guide depends on considering play equipment and features, and the setting, as a coherent whole. This approach generally results in play areas which are landscape schemes containing play equipment and features rather than more conventional 'playgrounds' dominated by equipment and bounded by fencing.

Involvement of a professional designer experienced in designing play spaces is critical to this approach. Good technical skills in landscape design and an understanding of play are both essential. Options for procurement and for choosing a designer should be considered together – they are strongly inter-linked.

Questions about design

Are you:

- Budgeting for professional design input and choosing a designer whose previous work shows they understand how to design using the play design principles?
- Developing an individual design brief for each play space, remembering that each site will need its own specific design to complement its location and ensure it is inclusive?
- Finding ways to help the people you are consulting step outside the limits of their experience, and appreciate new ways of doing things?
- Working to principles on designing for risk and challenge supported by an organisational play policy?

If elements of the design do not comply with industry standards, does your risk–benefit assessment explain clearly how and why your decision has been reached?

Have you considered the environmental impact of the proposal, from a design, construction and management view? For example the types of materials used, protection of wildlife, landscape enhancement, and energy use in construction and maintenance. Can recycled materials be used, or if not, can sustainable materials be sourced?

The role of the commissioner is critical. The person commissioning the work has the power to transform children's lives by developing play spaces that are based on a design-led approach to play provision. Central to the success of the project is a well-planned, clear design brief.

One function of the design phase is to stretch the imaginations of all those involved, beyond their existing knowledge and experience.

A design–led approach to developing play spaces

Historically, the design of play spaces has focused on locating a range of fixed play equipment within a fenced site to provide a variety of play activities. Those responsible for commissioning play spaces are often under pressure, from restricted budgets and heavy workloads, to work quickly with contractors to install pre-designed play areas. Whilst this model of working can result in well-used play spaces, there is growing awareness that by using a site-specific design-led approach, it is possible to create play spaces offering a wider range of play opportunities and far greater choice for children about how they play.

In a design-led approach, the play value, landscaping, equipment and features are all embedded in the designer's thinking from the start, and the play space is designed specially for its location, with equipment and other features enhanced by the landscape setting.

Currently, many play spaces are created with little or no input from a professional designer experienced in landscape design and with an understanding of play. Designing play spaces using the 10 design principles set out in Chapter 2 of this guide requires the skills and experience of different people.

The role of the commissioner

The single most important person in the provision of play opportunities is the person who commissions children's play areas on behalf of the provider or client organisation. Wherever they are, in local authorities, voluntary organisations, parish councils or community groups, the purchaser or procurement officer has the opportunity to inspire and excite children – giving them childhood memories they will keep for ever.

With an understanding of children's drive to play, their own play memories, a freeing-up of imaginations, a commitment to do the best possible for local communities, and the help of this guide, the person commissioning a play space has the power to transform children's lives. Wherever they live, this will give children and young people the absorbing, exciting, enriching outdoor play experiences they need and deserve.

The commissioner for the client organisation will also be responsible for ensuring there is clarity on budget, programme and the scope of the design brief. They will play an important leadership role throughout the project and will need to have a strong vision for the play space, as the interested parties – designer; community group – may well have their own, sometimes conflicting, agendas. The client will be a party to the contract (as the employer) and will also have specific responsibilities under the Construction, Design and Management (CDM) 2007 regulations (HSE, 2007).

Developing a design brief

The first task for many commissioners is to define what is required from the play space. A good design brief sets out the collective aspirations and goals of the project, and is the client's responsibility. A poor brief will result in a poor project. The design brief should summarise the key information gathered in the planning and preparation stages, and define

policies on risk, benefits and maintenance. It should also be informed by the client's understanding of how the scheme might respond to the design principles.

A template for a design brief is set out in Figure 1, showing the sort of information it might contain. Not everything in the template will be appropriate to all projects and careful thought and planning are essential before the brief is drawn up. A design brief as comprehensive as the full template is more likely to be appropriate for larger-scale projects, or even destination play spaces; smaller-scale projects may only require a smaller amount of key information.

Figure 1: Design brief template

This template for a design brief shows the sort of information the brief needs to cover if all aspects of the design cycle are to be addressed.

1. Project data

Site location

Site history

Landowner

Client

Site plan should show the aspect, and contain information on services present on site (such as electricity, gas, CCTV)

2. Site usage

Age groups

Are there particular age groups which predominate in the area? Or a particular age group that is a high priority as they may not currently be catered for? Remember that the best play spaces are not prescriptive about age.

Social issues

For example: might the site be prone to vandalism, or is it next to a children's centre.

Consultation

Include details of consultation undertaken to date or information on events still to be held.

3. Site features of particular note to be aware of, for example:

Opportunities: topography; vegetation; natural water bodies.
Constraints: traffic; site access; adjacent railway line; busy roads.

4. Design principles

Specific design principles for the project should refer to the 10 design principles in this guide, but may also expand on the key aims and aspirations for the play space, including for example, layout, use of materials, surfacing, equipment, and topography.

5. Sketch layout and photos

Include a sketch plan drawn to scale showing initial ideas for the layout of the space, if this has been prepared. The plan should indicate the site boundary, key features and access on the site. Photos should be included to illustrate these from all sides.

6. Submission requirements

Set out the process for selecting the contractor/designer/manufacturer. Smaller schemes will be likely to require a single stage process whereas more complex, larger-budget schemes may need a two stage selection process.

Outline what should form part of the submission.

7. Selection criteria

Outline the selection criteria. Include the ability of the proposal to meet the key aims for the space, the 10 design principles, and play values and quality of setting as key considerations.

8. Budget

State what the budget is for design, consultation, construction and follow-up.

9. Timetable

Indicate the intended timetable for the selection process.

The procurement process

There are two main options for designing and implementing new or refurbished play spaces. Local authorities and other providers can either recruit a designer, from their own organisation or from a design company to lead the design cycle and oversee the building process, or they can work with a play equipment company who employs their own landscape architect or designer and may undertake both the design and build process.

Whichever process is used the commissioner should be looking for an individual, design-led approach for each play space, which may involve purchasing play equipment and features from different companies. They must also check the previous experience and work of the specific designer to be involved and ensure they have the skills as well as the imagination to design and develop each play space using the 10 play space design principles.

The landscape design-led process is most likely to result in a play space where all elements are considered together from the outset, and where any equipment and features are located within a setting which complements their play value.

This will involve following the same process for designing and implementing the play space as for other landscape schemes, with the design work led by an experienced designer. The typical landscape design process begins with a detailed survey, continues with an analysis of the site's opportunities and constraints, and arrives at a design informed by these findings.

Though few landscape architects and designers receive formal training in designing for play, they do have skills in 'place-making', and should be able to design play spaces that are places in their own right, incorporating play equipment and features with sensitivity to their surroundings.

Early design work can be led by a designer experienced in working with landscapes (such as an artist). The remaining stages – detailed design, preparation of contract drawings and specification, and administration of the contract on site – all require sound technical skills and experience, which are most likely to be possessed by a play designer or skilled landscape architect.

In **Horsham Park** the playground was redesigned with the help of a local landscape architect. The scheme was constructed by a landscape contractor, with play equipment supplied by nominated suppliers, using a mix of manufacturers. By treating the design process in this way, it was possible to include bespoke elements such as carved bridge parapets and a totem pole made by a local woodcarver.

Horsham Park.

Local authorities and other providers commissioning play spaces frequently appoint play equipment companies to design and build a number of playgrounds. Some of these companies have their own specialist designers with expertise in both landscape design and play design and can work with commissioners to develop site-specific play spaces using a design-led approach.

If appointing a designer or company to carry out work on a design and build basis, remember that a successful play space should not be dominated by equipment and their proposal plan should locate the equipment in a setting that will enhance its appearance and play value.

The decision as to which company should be appointed will always be influenced by cost considerations, but it is essential to consider other factors, such as whether the scheme provides for the desired range of play opportunities and experiences. A local authority officer in Buckinghamshire describes this process:

> **We've recently moved over to assessing the tenders on play value much more and this has forced the quality standards up, with suppliers now trying to outdo each other for natural play as well as good design and sheer quantity of features … we score each activity and feature for points and use this information to guide us in consideration of the tenders. In the end though it still comes down to us trying to decide which will offer the best play opportunities for the next 15 years or more.**
> **(Green Space Improvements Officer)**

Some local authorities have a 'framework agreement' with a manufacturer or landscape architect, who having agreed their costs and committed to these over a set period of time, will then design multiple sites in that locality. If each play space is to be developed using the play design principles, and be designed specifically for its site, these frameworks will need to ensure sufficient flexibility to allow for a different design to be developed for each space. If the existing framework is not sufficiently flexible local authorities are not restricted to using those companies on the 'framework' and can invite other companies to join a competitive bidding process.

> **We have plotted all our sites and the suppliers onto GIS along with our play deficiency areas to ensure that we don't have the same play equipment everywhere in a local community.**
> **(Green Space Improvements Officer)**

The role of the designer

Involvement of a suitably experienced designer is integral to creating good quality play spaces, and is something to which all schemes should aspire.

The role of the designer is to lead the design process confidently, working in partnership with the client, community and other stakeholders. Their range of tasks will be dependent on the procurement route, but could include some or all of the following – helping the community realise their aspirations; identifying the 'sense of place' for the particular location; opening people's eyes to opportunities beyond their everyday experience; acting as a source of specialist knowledge with regard to technical issues; preparing contract documentation; and looking after the implementation of the contract on site.

It is possible for play providers to work with other stakeholders instead of a designer – such as community groups – and still develop spaces which are more creatively designed, however the absence of a designer experienced in both play and landscape design is likely to hinder the design process.

Choosing a designer

Designers with an appropriate range of skills, knowledge and experience to design imaginative play spaces may come from different backgrounds and disciplines. This might include, for example, landscape architects, specialist play designers and urban or garden designers. For continuity, a skilled designer should be involved in the scheme from beginning to end. Whether a consultant designer or one employed by a play equipment company is involved, a full landscape design service will, ideally include contract administration throughout the scheme until its completion. Some commissioners may employ additional skills, such as a local artist, who could add features to the site that draw on the local history and character of the area.

Whatever type of professional is used, it is vital to check that the designer has the necessary skills and experience – technical and design skills and a good understanding of play. The table below sets out the full range of skills and experience which could potentially be required from play space designers.

Involving a designer such as a landscape architect on a consultancy basis will entail costs for professional fees; approximately 10 to 15 per cent of the project costs. Play equipment manufacturing companies offering an inclusive design and build service will have factored design costs into their estimates.

The play spaces described in this guide, even the smaller budget schemes, have all been developed with professional design input, illustrating that a scheme of any size or budget can benefit from the design-led approach. Choosing the most suitable procurement route involves careful exploration of the options available in terms of design expertise, whether via play equipment companies or a consultant landscape architect or designer.

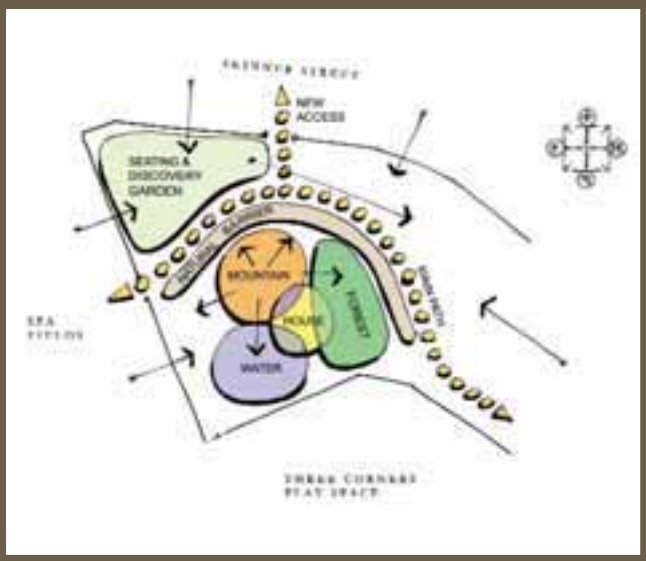
What to look for in a play space designer

- Skills in place-making and an understanding of the idea of a 'sense of place'
- Skills in landscape design, to create a variety of play environments within one site which together form an attractive place for children, young people and their carers, and offer appropriate scope for usage by other members of the community.
- Understanding of children and play, and an understanding of how they will respond to their physical environment
- Knowledge and experience of practical and technical issues relating specifically to surfacing and equipment and more generally to landscape design
- Knowledge and understanding of sustainable resources and environmental issues
- Knowledge and experience of site administration and contract management, including preparation of contract documentation
- Ability to develop and implement a design concept so as to enhance the play value of the scheme, not overwhelm or ignore it
- Ability to work with community groups and potential users to develop a scheme which will meet community needs
- Understanding of regulations and guidance about play provision including inclusive design; designing in risk and challenge; and industry standards

At **Spa Fields**, a landscape designer was appointed to design a new play space and administer its construction on site. The images below show the different stages of the design process.

© Parklife

Stage 1 – the project was inspired by Tolkein's 'Lord of the Rings' and this Hobbit House was replicated in the final scheme.



© Parklife

Stage 2 – the designer prepared a concept/zoning plan for a layout which would address the main opportunities and constraints of the site.

© Parklife

Stage 3 – The outline concept plan was developed into a more detailed plan showing how the equipment would be integrated within its setting.

© Parklife

Stage 4 – The finished scheme, showing a hobbit-inspired mound.

Local authorities often employ landscape architects, and some consultants in the private sector are beginning to specialise in designing play areas. The Children's Play Information Service (CPIS) has a list of play consultants and designers with specialist expertise in play space design and the Association of Play Industries can provide a list of its member companies offering design and build services.

Selecting a designer

A good way of determining which design route to adopt is to invite a number of companies to talk through their approach and a selection of their past schemes, and then work with the company best suited to the project's needs.

Visiting play spaces that the designers and equipment manufacturing companies have designed, or at least talking to the people who manage and maintain these sites to check the design concept has worked, is also a good way of assessing whether they have the skills and experience needed.

For larger more complex schemes, it is good practice to carry out a two-stage process.

Stage 1: Approach a number of designers in an initial open submission and ask to see examples of previous schemes and their initial response to the design brief (state that the standard submission consisting of a glossy and colourful artist's perspective will not be required).

Stage 2: Shortlist two – four companies and invite them to respond to the brief in more detail, by including (for example) a site plan to illustrate the strategy for the site and give an indication of landscaping. If engaging a designer who is not a play equipment manufacturer, it may be necessary to pay a one-off stipend towards the short-listed candidates' expenses on receipt of their entry.

Questions about designers:

- Do you like their work?
- Do they have a good track record in delivering successful play space projects?
- Have they had experience of designing and developing the landscape elements, choosing and locating play equipment and features to complement the setting?
- Will they approach the design of the equipment and setting as one single design-led project?

The role of the community

The role of community members is to advise and inform the design process, acknowledging that they are temporary custodians of the play space and represent users both today and of the future. The community should not be expected to do the design work; the principal community role is to help develop the design brief.

When asking children and adults about what a new play space might offer, the designer should find ways of expanding possibilities and raising expectations beyond everyday experiences – not to raise hopes unreasonably but to allow for change and innovation. If an existing play space is not particularly successful, then a refurbishment project might be the opportunity to do something different; but the starting point is always extending horizons.

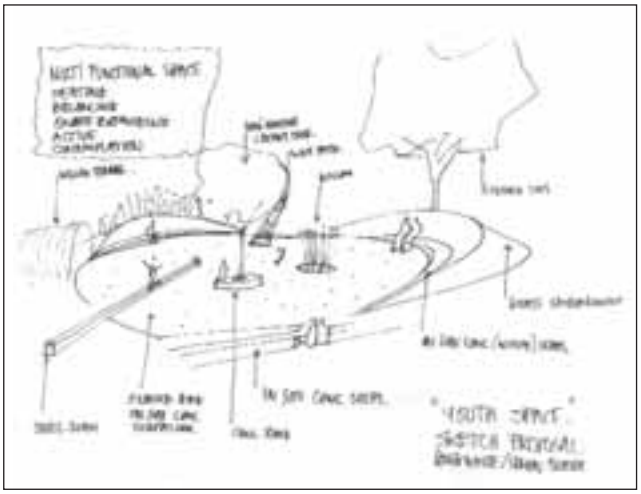
Asking adults to think about how and where they played as children, and how similar opportunities might be replicated for local children today, can be a powerful starting point. Children can talk about things they would like to **do** rather than the equipment they would like to **have**.

> **To begin with questions about play equipment is to start in the wrong place. It would be alarming if an architect began a design for a house by inviting the client to choose the sofas. 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? It is the job of a designer to pose these questions and it is fundamental that the design for a play space should be a response to the children's answers.**
> **(Melville, 2004)**

Taking children and adults to new types of play areas has been used successfully in many play space design projects. It is also helpful to use images of other sites, to avoid being trapped by the current condition and appearance of the site. The Free Play Network has a good collection of images available on its website.

Initially, it is best to get people enthused about and committed in principle to new concepts, for example the use of natural surfacing materials, landscaped play settings, or designing in risk, before getting to grips with the challenges of the specific site.

Local school children and the design team attended design workshops and created the final proposal for Trefusis Playing Fields together



Sketch plan prepared by the designers

Regulations and guidance

Designing for risk and challenging play

Risk–benefit assessment

Play providers are legally required to carry out a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment of their provision, and to act on their findings. An assessment is a practical assessment of the benefits and the risks of the activity with a focus on hazards with the potential to cause real harm. It is not about creating a risk-free society but about ensuring that reasonable precautions are taken to avoid injury. Equipment standards, such as EN 1176, and other guidance help in making decisions about what is reasonable. However, they are not compulsory and risk assessment allows for consideration of other factors. For example, risk assessment permits local circumstances to be taken into account, such as the age groups catered for, the type of demand, local environmental factors, health considerations and the use of non-standard or natural features.

Risk-benefit assessment is a method of risk assessment in which an evaluation of the potential benefits to children and others, for example play and social value, are considered alongside the potential risks associated with the provision. It allows providers to satisfy their legal obligations, while promoting a balanced approach that considers industry standards and other guidance in the light of local circumstances, and of children's need for more exciting and challenging play.

The approach is supported by the HSE and RoSPA.

Risk management in play provision should start with a clear play policy which asserts the values, understandings, principles and criteria that form the framework for making judgments about play provision. It should make explicit the duty of play providers to offer risk-taking opportunities. The policy must be formally endorsed by the relevant authority or organisation. Further details of developing a framework for risk-benefit management is discussed in detail in the *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* (DCSF and Play England, 2008).

The primary legal requirement concerning play originates from The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This Act *implies* the need for risk assessment, and in addition to this, the 'Management of health and safety at work regulations 1999' specifically require a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment. Because the application of this Act to the play environment is nowadays commonplace, risk assessments should always be carried out as part of the design process for play spaces. There are a number of definitions of 'risk assessment.' In this guide it refers to the act of identifying hazards, assessing risks, and deciding what control measures, if any, are required, in line with the Health and Safety Executive's *Five steps to risk assessment* (HSE, 2007a).

The risk-benefit assessment approach described in the *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* proposes that the risk assessments carried out under health and safety procedures routinely incorporate an assessment of the benefits to children's experience of providing, modifying or removing a play feature. The process, which considers the application of standards and guidance as one factor alongside many others, should provide a robust and transparent means of describing the decision-making processes and judgements.

Industry standards

Although there is no specific legislation on play safety in the UK, there are agreed Europe-wide industry standards for play provision, designed to ensure children are not exposed to unreasonable risks or unexpected hazards whilst playing. These standards have a crucial role in play space design and development and should always be considered. However, the standards do not constitute a legal requirement and if a commissioner is considering a design that includes equipment or features that do not comply with the standards, or for which there is no defined standard, the primary legal requirement is for a risk-assessment to be undertaken (PLAYLINK, 2006).

The Climbing Forest at Coombe Abbey Country Park does not conform neatly with EN1176 guidance. However, with correct use of risk assessment guided by EN1176 and thorough traversing/testing of the equipment by an experienced inspector it was found to be acceptable. The contractor and inspector describe the process:

We had concerns as we didn't know how inspectors would respond… we knew that there were minor breaches of EN1176 but these had been risk assessed at the design stage … We agreed with Coventry Council that we would get the safety certification from the German testing house TUV. We also wanted a British inspector to assess it, so we asked the Child Accident Prevention Trust to carry out an inspection … they liked the system and thought the risk was acceptable.
(Collings, 2008)

Any construction of large logs will fail grip/grasp requirements as log diameters are usually larger than the handholds. This can only be risk assessed by traversing the item, which managers should make a condition of annual inspections on this kind of site.
(Wheway 2008)

The Climbing Forest in Coombe Abbey Country Park was designed specifically for its setting, with a focus on teenagers, expressly to provide risk and challenge in play.

In some places confusion about the role of standards has, in the past, led to limited use of 'non-compliant' play features or those not specifically discussed in the standard. This might include, for example, logs, boulders, hard landscaping, planting or changes of level. Whilst risk assessment must be carried out it is entirely possible for commissioners to request the installation of equipment and features that are not specifically described in the standards or are 'non-compliant' if they think the play value justifies this.

Designing for inclusive play

The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act aims to ensure that all those who are disabled have the same access to public services (and by implication, public parks and playgrounds) as those who are not disabled. Successful play spaces should, as far as is reasonably possible, offer the same quality and extent of play experience to disabled children and young people as is available to those who are not disabled, whilst accepting that not all equipment can be completely accessible to everyone.

Inclusion by Design (Goodridge, ed. Douch, 2008) sets out the following six principles, established by the Disability Rights Commission, which form the foundation of inclusive design:

- Ease of use
- Freedom of choice and access to mainstream activities
- Diversity and difference
- Legibility and predictability
- Quality
- Safety

© Sabrina Aaronovitch, KIDS

Inclusion by Design also looks at how these principles have been applied in practice on a number of sites, including the Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground in Kensington Gardens. The Replay Project in Stirling is another example.

The Replay Project

In 1998/99 Stirling Council, Stirling University and a local voluntary organisation investigated whether and how disabled children, and their carers used public play areas, to identify any barriers to genuine accessibility and where possible devise solutions.

For most children their most significant play experiences occur informally in their own neighbourhoods with other children and not under the supervision or direction of adults. As it is often this kind of experience that disabled children do not have, good public play areas can play a compensatory role.

The following elements were most valued by disabled children and their carers:

- the physical context of the play area – the surrounding space and general landscape, including planting
- natural and loose materials, and the opportunity to use them
- opportunities for risk and challenge
- spaces that welcomed accompanying adults through the provision of seating and 'perching' places
- equipment that can accommodate a companion – such as wider slides, bigger platforms on climbing structures, accessible roundabouts
- swings that can support bigger children
- the absence of physical barriers (such as log edging) round elements of the site.

In general, complicated adaptations, special equipment or special provision were not favoured and were not felt to be necessary. Children and parents wanted to be able to use ordinary neighbourhood provision just like everybody else.
(S Gutteridge, Stirling Play Service)

Designing for sustainability

Designers are often best equipped to ensure that schemes are designed to take account of long-term sustainability. As with all landscape schemes, specification and choice of materials for play spaces must consider sustainability. Using reclaimed or recycled materials should be considered along with energy consumption throughout the life of the equipment or material, especially where materials not normally used in play spaces are proposed. For example, reclaimed or FSC-approved wood should be used. If a pond is to be a feature, consider sourcing a sustainable butyl lining or contracting for a traditional puddle clay lining. Care should be taken when designing lighting for a play site, as this impacts on light pollution and energy use. Other points to consider include:

- whole life environmental impact of materials – sourcing, manufacture, recycled content, toxic material content, carbon emissions, disposal/reuse of materials;
- conservation, and ideally enhancement, of wildlife habitats in and around the play space; and
- minimisation of energy and water use during construction/refurbishment and ongoing management of the play space.

Good equipment companies will have environmental accreditation and can advise play providers on the long-term sustainability of their scheme.

Detailed design and specification issues

Careful consideration is needed for each element of the design with both new-build and when improving or upgrading an existing play space. Commissioners and designers need to question their rationale for including each element and have a clear understanding of both the function and the potential for increasing play value.

When refurbishing existing play areas consider:

Boundaries: if some sort of boundary is essential consider using planting, a hedge perhaps, or mounding in place of fencing to contain the play space.

Equipment: relocate equipment, re-paint it, or keep it in the same place but change the setting to enhance its appearance and increase play value.

Ground modelling: change a level site into one with mounding, ditches, hollows and tunnels.

Surfacing: add a greater variety of surfacing types to increase the play value of the site and make it look and feel more attractive.

Planting: introducing planting should always be considered, as the play value and benefits to children are important.

Natural features: logs, boulders, fallen trees, water, scoops for puddles and ditches can all extend the play value of a site.

The choices to be made will depend on each particular scheme, the play needs of local children, and the advantages and disadvantages for the site in question. The starting point for making these choices should always be the objective of providing a play space with as much play value, and which encompasses as many play opportunities and experiences as possible.

At **Langdon Park**, existing equipment was relocated from its original position behind a fence where it was set in ageing tarmac. The new layout sites the equipment without fencing, alongside the main footpath through the park to the nearby station. The new surfacing and play mounds around the equipment have greatly improved its appearance and made it more appealing.

© Nicola Butler

Equipment relocated alongside the path to the station forms a 'playable route'.

At **Causewayhead Park**, internal fencing was removed to open up the play space to the surrounding park. The paddling pool was re-modelled and complemented with the addition of a new water pump nearby, allowing for a messy but creative combination of sand and water play. New planting in the sand and around equipment (some of which was re-painted) helped integrate the play space with its surroundings. Children now use the whole park to play, whereas previously they only played inside the fenced area.

© Stirling Council Play Services

The paddling pool was given a new lease of life at Causewayhead Park with the addition of these decked platforms.

More information on specific design issues for both new-build and refurbishment projects can be found in Chapter 5.

Designing for play: an ongoing process

The play design process is an experimental process and it is important that designers appreciate at the outset – and communicate this to clients – that there will be a need to evaluate, to learn from successes and mistakes, and to keep sites under review throughout their lifetime. Designing for play involves a complex interaction between people, objects, and the environment. With a design process which is more art than science it is impossible to predict exactly how a site will be used in practice.

Design cycle – stage 3: Construct

During the construction stage of a play space the active involvement of both the client and the prospective users is more limited. Where a company is offering a design and build service the same company assumes responsibility for the construction phase. Where a landscape architect or other consultant has been used, this phase is usually handed to a contractor, selected by the client or the landscape architect, though the designer will usually still have a role in overseeing the implementation of the design and monitoring progress.

One role for the commissioner is to find ways of maintaining the goodwill of the community and keeping stakeholders informed of progress. Careful thought should also be given to the timing of construction so that any soft landscape work can establish before the site is heavily in use. Risks associated with the construction phase, for example groundworks, vehicle movements and work at height will need to be controlled and the CDM Regulations 2007 (HSE, 2007) may apply.

If the construction phase must comply with the CDM regulations, clients must be aware of their responsibilities and what services the landscape architect's fees cover. Both design and build companies and landscape architects will help with this.

Plan construction to minimise time wastage while contractors are on site. Time is money in construction, and delays can lead to increased costs. Make sure primary decision makers (usually the commissioner and designer) are available to resolve issues quickly and work with the contractors who have the experience to offer practical solutions to on-site issues.

Questions about the construction phase:

- How will you keep local people informed of progress on site, especially the completion dates and any delays?
- Will the contractor help organise visits to see progress on site?
- How are they getting on with local children, is there anything you can do to improve site security?
- Who is building time into their own work programme to liaise closely with the designer on behalf of the client, answer questions and resolve problems throughout the construction phase?
- Who is monitoring the environmental impact of the construction work – carbon emissions, construction waste, transport demand, materials and noise?

Supporting people through change

If a project steering group has already been established, it is useful to keep this going during construction. Failure to do this can lead to problems but maintaining a successful steering group can form the basis of a 'friends group' to provide ongoing support for the play space.

Many projects benefit from a 'community champion', to represent the community and to act as an advocate for the scheme. This role requires good leadership skills, assertiveness and diplomacy. At Wyvis Street Play Space, a development that many residents were uneasy about at first, the manager of the residents' Teviot Action Group (TAG) acted as the voice of the community, representing community views. As meetings involving officers and the designer were held on site, the TAG manager took a leading role, communicating progress at TAG meetings. A highly respected community member, the TAG manager used her influence very positively. The manager became a strong supporter of the scheme, and her willingness to stand up for it in public made a great difference when the play space was first completed.

It is important for commissioning clients to remember that local people often feel unsettled by change, to the degree that they might even prefer the status quo to a new facility – even if they consider the status quo to be unsatisfactory. Dealing with change sensitively will be important to long-term success of the scheme and to it becoming established in the days following completion. As people often develop strong emotional attachments to play spaces – even informal ones – it is important to respect this.

Involving the community in the construction process

Involving the community during the construction stage can help people adjust to change. Supervised and prearranged site visits during construction can be useful to help to build a sense of ownership of the new space by the community, so that when it opens they already feel it is 'theirs'. It is common for local children to see the erection of security fencing as a challenge to overcome. Inviting children and young people onto the site and encouraging them to develop a relationship with the contractor and construction team may help (bearing in mind the health and safety requirements).

> **Our contractors regularly take a football to the site with them. If there are kids hanging around the site, they compromise by getting the kids to leave the works area alone in exchange for a kick about afterwards. Six builders v twenty kids is quite common. (Rimmer, 2007)**

It may be possible to require that contractors provide training and work experience for local people. At **Spa Fields** in the London Borough of Islington, the designers ensured that the contractor's offer of employment to local young people was a contractual obligation. Some of these temporary employees were subsequently employed by the contractor on a permanent basis.

© Parklife

At Spa Fields, the employment on site of local young people was just one of the many means by which this group became actively involved in the project.

Regular progress updates are very useful. It is particularly helpful for the contractor to produce a 'What's happening this month' article, for example, in local newspapers or attached to security fencing. If there is a problem or delay, own up to it early. Trying to hide it will undermine relationships.

In the early stages of development at Wyvis Street Play Space, the designer focused too much on engaging the community during design development, and not enough on keeping up communication while the work was being carried out. Concerns multiplied as unfounded rumours about the scheme ran rife. Things came to a head when residents demanded a meeting with the designer 'to put the site back to the way it was at the beginning'.

Once communication with residents had been reopened, the designer and client together were able to reassure the community and dispel some myths. Had there been more regular communication with this important group of people, it could have prevented many worries from arising in the first place.

Volunteer involvement can be an excellent form of community engagement, though usually this is best left until towards the end of the construction, when the site is safer for volunteers to use. Volunteer assistance can make savings on capital costs, though these can be offset by the extra staff costs in administering volunteer support. Working with volunteers can be extremely rewarding and of great benefit to the project.

At **Waverley Park** in Stirling, children helped the contractor with tree planting, and this involvement may have contributed to the low levels of vandalism on the site. Children really enjoy getting involved with planting – and feel a greater sense of ownership of the final scheme, as a result.

©Stirling Council Play Services

Managing the contractor on site

In a landscape design-led process the contractor's work would be overseen by the landscape architect or designer. In a design and build contract, it is more likely that the equipment company will administer the contract themselves. Whichever process is chosen it is important that the commissioning officer representing the client is sufficiently well resourced to project manage the contract, both in terms of training and in being able to devote enough time to deal with queries and unforeseen problems. *Spon's Landscape Contract Handbook* (Clamp, 1995) is a source of useful information on contract management for landscape schemes.

While contractors are working on site, there will inevitably be decisions that may have an impact on the scheme's design. It is crucial that the designer is involved in these discussions to ensure that decisions taken retain the integrity of the agreed design.

The designer can also reinforce design objectives to the contractor, and ensure that the subtleties are understood and appreciated by those carrying out the work. Ground modelling is a good example of a task that benefits from being overseen by the designer. Even with a clear drawing and detailed specification the absence of an artistic eye during construction may result in work falling short of expectations.

Timing the construction work

Sometimes it is best to implement a scheme in phases rather than in one single hit. This allows local people and the commissioning clients to see how a site is developing. Smaller incremental changes can be easier to manage than one big change. Implementing a scheme in smaller phases also allows greater flexibility in the design process.

There can, however, be difficulties with phasing implementation: the risk of schemes remaining incomplete, and physical damage to recently completed work. There might also be issues in some locations with site security, with attendant financial implications. The advantages and disadvantages should be carefully weighed before deciding how to schedule the construction of the scheme.

Provost's Park, Gargunnock in Stirlingshire, is a play space refurbishment which could be easily replicated incrementally, on a relatively low budget. Here separate play spaces have been created around the edge of a football pitch, each with its own character.

Provost's Park.

Design cycle – stage 4: Use

Celebrating the opening of the play space and involving well-known local people helps raise the profile of the project, making users feel they have gained something special. Keeping a close eye on the play space in the early days after completion, and dealing with any vandalism promptly, will show children that the space is important to the community. Schemes can suffer in their early days when the novelty value is high.

Questions about use:

- Have you considered inviting local people and dignitaries to a special opening event?
- Could you organise community activities to maintain support for the play space?
- Could you ask the local community to take an informal role in overseeing the site?

Celebrating the opening

Once construction of the play space is complete, a public celebration and opening event will provide an opportunity to thank the people who have been involved and raise the profile of the space.

Invite your suppliers to the opening – they like play areas full of kids, and will often come up with freebies. It also helps establish a good relationship which is essential for the ongoing maintenance. (Rimmer, 2007)

© Stirling Council Play Services

At Causewayhead Park, the improvements to the play space included the return to site of the restored sheep sculptures, an event accompanied by these fiddle-players.

A community fun day, involving children, local councillors, senior council officers, maintenance staff, park keepers, play rangers or other playwork staff can be a good way to publicise the new space, helping to build community commitment and ensuring that residents value it even more. The more the play space is valued by the community, the more it will be looked after.

Establishing the scheme

The period immediately after the play space is completed is crucial. A newly designed play space will quickly attract attention of children and young people. This can test local residents, who may not have anticipated the extent to which children and young people would be using the place on a more regular basis and often at later times during the evening. Providers need to work with residents to deal with issues arising from increased use.

This relatively heavy use can test and stretch the space and it is sensible to allow for additional maintenance during the establishment period. Those responsible for managing the site need to keep a close eye on how it is being used during this period. Enlisting local residents to be the 'eyes and ears', and planning for additional visits by dog wardens, community police officers, and others, should all be considered.

Sometimes the novelty of newly designed spaces can attract the 'wrong' sort of attention, such as vandalism. Any damage – however minor – should be remedied as soon as possible to ensure that the message that the site is looked after and cared for is clear to the whole community.

The role of the community in long-term maintenance

Often a community group will feel a strong sense of ownership of a play space by the time they have worked through the process of design and development. Such a group can play a very positive role monitoring the space informally, for example, in a park situation acting as the eyes and ears of park staff.

At **Wyvis Street Play Space** a local resident who had initially been sceptical about provision of an uncovered sandpit became its strongest advocate and now checks it regularly to make sure it's safe for children to use.

Wyvis Street Play Space.

Animating the play space

Animating the play space with organised events and activities will encourage use and establish it as somewhere new and special. In the case of a redesigned space, it can help change its previous culture. Animating the space will keep it dynamic, and help maintain contact with the local community and users.

Events and activities may be occasional or part of a programme. They can be low key and intimate or on a grand scale. They can be for children, children with their carers, or the whole community. They can encourage local talent, such as musicians and storytellers. Events organised at times when the space is not normally used – a dawn chorus breakfast picnic, a winter evening stargazing event, a summer solstice barbecue – can have a magical atmosphere and create new feelings and memories.

At Darnley Park in March 2007, an event called *All Lit Up* marked the anniversary of the arrival of electricity in Stirling with a light festival involving local residents and including a firework display designed by children.

Since **Darnley Park** in Stirling opened, it has been the focus for numerous events.
The council's play service works with local children on a regular basis, and children have been involved in organisation and hosting of events in the park during the summers of 2006 and 2007.

Design cycle – stage 5: Maintain

Planning for ongoing maintenance is central to the design cycle. Successful play spaces are sensitively and carefully maintained and resources must be allocated for a high standard of maintenance. The hallmark of a successful and well-used play scheme is wear and tear – and a degree of this is perfectly acceptable. Wear and tear must not be allowed to descend into neglect, though, which can quickly become a downward spiral.

Questions about maintenance:

- How have you considered maintenance implications in the design?
- Have you considered involving the community in basic inspections?

The importance of maintenance

A good standard of maintenance is essential to long-term sustainability of play areas. Maintenance options and costs should be analysed at the outset to ensure that adequate resources will be available. This includes everything from litter collection to checking for hazards and replacing equipment and features. Children will be more likely to respect the play space if the council or owner is seen to be investing in caring for it.

Resources will often be necessary to allow adjustments once designs are implemented. It is not possible to foresee all the issues and possibilities on the drawing board and the experience of construction and use may highlight additional maintenance requirements and risk-benefit issues. These judgements may change and develop over the life of the play space and there should be opportunities and resources built into maintenance programmes to experiment with and reconfigure the space.

Play spaces that fall out of use even temporarily because equipment is not working or is poorly maintained, quickly become a source of frustration to users and may become more vulnerable to further damage. Regular repairs and a quick response time are both essential. At Horsham Park repairs are carried out (if possible) or made safe (if not) within 24 hours of being reported by an in-house team.

People from the local community or friends' groups can also form part of the inspection team. More details of how this can be achieved are in the *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit* (Children's Play Council, 2006).

Good design and purchase of high quality equipment and features may mean a greater initial outlay but should have the advantage of lower maintenance costs. If some parts of equipment wear out more quickly than others, consider ordering key spare parts along with new equipment. This will help avoid delays in repairs. Allowing for asset depreciation is also important. Make sure that, after a suitable period has elapsed (usually 10–12 years) funds are available for renewal of key features.

Inspections

Technical inspection refers to the ongoing, largely routine checking of play facilities for soundness, wear and tear, damage, maintenance and cleanliness. Technical inspection should alert managers to potential sources of harm. It can give some indication of potential danger to users and help set priorities for repairs and remedial action.

The frequency of inspections should be based on the levels of usage, and whilst daily inspections may be necessary in heavily used play spaces a weekly inspection in a quieter location may be adequate. With basic training and proper management, there is no reason why this should not be carried out by a litter-picker or other grounds maintenance officer. Local community groups can also play a useful role in overseeing maintenance of a play space, but their involvement must be managed carefully.

For further information on the technical inspection process described here, see the *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide* (DCSF and Play England, 2008).

Some wear and tear of equipment, surfaces and other features is inevitable. The degree of wear that is appropriate will depend on each site. At **Horsham Park** the play space was redesigned amongst existing trees which have had artist-designed seating constructed around them. Wear and tear around the seating has meant that the grass has worn away, leaving only bare sandy soil. In some contexts this would be seen as poor maintenance, but in this location it really does not matter.

Shady area with artist-carved seating, Horsham Park.

Whilst some wear and tear is perfectly acceptable, unattended litter and repairs lend an air of neglect, so these should be dealt with promptly. Keeping records, noticing trends and alerting suppliers to damage when ordering spare parts might help the manufacturer understand and improve their products if necessary.

Concern about the routine maintenance of some play features – for example loose-fill surfacing, water, self-built play features – can stop some clients from commissioning more creatively. Chapter 5 includes more detailed information on how these issues can be addressed.

Design cycle – stage 6: Review

Completion of a play space does not mark the end of the design cycle but the beginning of a new phase, one of continual review. A good play space evolves and is never finished. In a vibrant, living play space the manager keeps a close eye on how the space is used and looks for opportunities to introduce new elements. Allocating a budget for post-development adaptations can increase the play value.

Questions about review:

- Have you set dates to review the play space?
- How much money can you set aside for possible design modifications?
- Who will you have to agree any changes to the layout with?

Reviewing the play space

Over time patterns of usage of play spaces change making it crucial to review the play space at intervals after completion. This allows for the possibility of re-configuring elements of the design. Review of usage and of user or neighbourhood satisfaction should begin after the novelty has evened out. A review after six or nine months is likely to give better results than one shortly after completion.

In Stirling, the Play Team carries out detailed evaluations of all sites before proposals are developed, and monitors schemes after completion. A team of 'roving reporters', including children of various ages, is led by the play designer. The team usually works in family groups and adopts an experiential approach to the site – based on using the site. Observation of the team at play is combined with their written reports to develop a detailed understanding of users' needs.

Planning for any re-configuration is important. At Trefusis Playing Fields children were taking short-cuts through areas of planting. Rather than fence these off, the park management redesigned the planting areas to accommodate the desire lines by turfing them to provide informal grass paths through the shrubs. Having budget for improvements like these can make the difference between a play space becoming successfully established, and having it fail through apparent neglect.

Some play providers aim to hold back a proportion of the contract value to make changes. Whatever the mechanism is, it is vitally important to allow adequate revenue and sometimes capital resources to allow scope for improvements.

The climbing log at **Waverley Park** was installed in a second phase, after the main works had been completed. This log is actually in two sections, closely butted-up together.

Chapter 4:
Making other spaces more 'playable'

Children and young people should be able to play freely in their local neighbourhoods. Providing play opportunities is as much about creating general public space that offers play opportunities, as it is about designing and developing designated play spaces.

What is 'playable' space?

Playable space is one expression of 'shared' public space, which meets the needs of different people at the same time. Support for playable spaces can greatly extend the range of play opportunities offered to children and can be highly cost effective. A positive attitude towards children and young people and their play is a key feature of good playable spaces, and helps create a more child-friendly society.

> **A playable space is one where children's active play is a legitimate use of the space. Playability is a feature of fixed equipment play areas. But it is also a feature of some parks, recreation grounds, natural areas and other types of public open space… Playability is not just a matter of the physical characteristics of a space. It can also be influenced by social and cultural characteristics. For instance, a space that is dominated by people who are hostile to children's presence is obviously not playable, whatever its physical characteristics.**
> **(Greater London Authority, 2008)**

What characterises playable space?

Good playable spaces are welcoming to children and young people

Children and young people need to feel welcome in playable spaces. Most public open spaces and parks have enormous potential for play and children and young people should be encouraged and supported in playing in these spaces. The use of, for example 'No ball games' and 'Keep off the grass' signs should be routinely questioned and avoided unless there are strong safety reasons for their use (DCSF, 2007). The assumption that most structures should be designed with anti-skate features might also be questioned.

In Crown Lakes Country Park, Peterborough, an informal public open space, the council actively encourages tree climbing and building rope swings across numerous small streams and ditches in the wooded site. Swimming in the lake is encouraged, with access provided for swimmers from a specially designed timber platform.

Local children have created an informal BMX track in **Hampton**, near Peterborough; naturally occurring 'humps and bumps' have been added to, as the ground has been further sculpted, and site managers have allowed the activity to continue. This has required no expenditure on the part of the site owners but has been beneficial in making the BMX track possible and demonstrates that supporting playable space can be as much about attitudes as features.

Good playable space can include informal play features

In conventional play areas, the presence of play equipment acts as a signpost to children that they are welcome to play there. Playable space may need a similar 'signal' – boulders, logs, planting or equipment can highlight that children are expected to play there. A heap of woodchips left in a corner by local tree surgeons could be adopted by children for BMX use, often augmented by items they can bring along themselves.

Altab Ali Park, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, has a few small pieces of play equipment which have been installed informally between trees and planting. The lack of fencing means that the equipment has been absorbed into the park landscape, and the park has become more playable, with equipment doubling up as an informal seating area for adults and children.

Altab Ali Park.

Good playable space should be monitored for unexpected hazards

Children derive great benefit from being outdoors and creating their own play spaces without adult intervention. Once it is clear that local children are using a place, site owners should keep an eye on the situation. For example, children will often make a rope swing, using their own judgement as to what feels safe. In this case the site owner should take the same approach as with other features in playable space – do a risk assessment and also consider the benefits (Play Safety Forum, 2002).

Good playable space is shared space, which respects the needs of all users

Public space is generally shared space and the different groups of users may have differing needs for the way the space is designed. Often it is possible to meet many of these different needs by careful design that clarifies the potential use.

The part of the **South Bank Centre** on the River Thames, known as the Undercroft, has been used by skateboarders since the early 1970s. Originally an architectural dead-spot, it has become the home of British skateboarding and is a good example of an urban playable space. Initially the site management tried to prevent skateboarding, but it now continues uninterrupted – attracting visitors to one of London's best-known skateboarding arenas. This contrasts with the focus in many town centres on deterring skateboarding by designing structures that are difficult to ride on.

The Undercroft area at the South Bank Centre is perhaps one of the most well-known skateboarding locations In London.

Where to create playable space

Playable space in towns and cities

The most important locations for playable space are where children and young people would naturally want to play – on their local street, or the local green. Many different types of place can provide playable space. In parks and green spaces, trees, bushes and streams may give children and young people the chance to invent their own play. Urban areas such as streets, town centres, public squares and fountains may also provide play opportunities.

In **Horsham Park**, a maze close to the playground provides somewhere else for children to play. At the centre of the maze (for those who can find their way there) is a dragon, sculpted by a local artist, and the dragon's eggs are hidden in the surrounding shrub beds for children to discover.

Make your way to the maze centre to find the dragon…

…and on the way out, look for her eggs amongst the shrubs.

Water has always been part of the urban streetscape, and has a magnetic attraction for children. In **Russell Square** in London, the central paved area was re-laid to accommodate water jets flush with the ground. Jeppe Hein's temporary art installation by the **South Bank Centre** in London provided fun for children and adults in summer 2007. Laid out to form a grid and timed to switch on and off randomly, water jets prompted squeals of excitement.

Ground level water jets in Russell Square provide fun for people who don't mind getting their feet wet…

…but at the South Bank Centre wet weather clothing was essential for some.

Housing estates

Many residential estates are laid out with extensive networks of verges and greens, but because much of this land is in close proximity to housing, it requires careful handling if children are to play there. Nonetheless, housing estate land has great potential for providing play opportunities close to home.

At **Invermead Close** in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, a small under-used grass verge on the edge of an estate was redesigned to make it playable. The addition of a felled tree to climb on, along with seating and some changes to ground levels, were accompanied by additional shrub planting to screen neighbouring windows to maintain residents' privacy

Street play

Many children use their local street for play, especially when parents feel that they or their friends can keep an eye out for the children. Small corners that would not be noticed by adults can have great appeal for children such as side alleyways, a wider section of pavement, space outside some garage doors.

Opportunities for street play can be enhanced by reducing traffic volumes and speeds. Local streets can be planned, designed or adapted so that children and their families feel more confident about playing out. Streets that are well designed for play are usually also better for pedestrians, cyclists and the whole community. Street play is even more important now, given the significant reduction in the distance children travel independently since the 1960s, and the limited amounts of green space available in many high density housing developments (Wheway, 2007).

Home zones are streets that are designed to slow car traffic, give priority to pedestrians and cyclists, and create social space for residents. But home zones tend to be costly schemes to implement, often requiring expensive repaving. Sustrans, a national voluntary organisation with an interest in developing sustainable transport, is currently developing a pilot project, *DIY Streets* (Sustrans, 2008) working with local communities to take a simpler and more cost-effective approach to achieve similar benefits.

The Department for Transport's *Manual for Streets* (DfT, 2007), recommends the provision of 'pocket parks' and play spaces as a means of promoting streets as social places.

At **The Dings** home zone in Bristol a network of residential streets has been redesigned to create a high quality urban space incorporating traffic calming, planting and unique artworks. Comprehensive monitoring has measured the degree to which children play out, and early results indicate that parents are now more likely to allow their children to play out in the street than previously.

The Dings Home Zone, Bristol.

Playable space in the natural environment

In rural areas there are often restrictions on the space where children can play freely. Heavy, fast traffic on rural roads and through small towns and villages can make it difficult for children to move around independently and working farmland may not be accessible to them. Local authorities and others in rural areas may need to give as much consideration to the provision of playable space as those in urban areas.

Bedgebury Pinetum in Kent has introduced a series of informal playable spaces throughout the woodland. These are designed as a loosely connected series of play spaces to be discovered by children exploring the site. Carefully designed sightlines and a subtle approach to footpaths mean that children are 'led' to the spaces without realising it. These play spaces provide 'play interludes' complementing the natural environment.

At Bedgebury Pinetum forest clearings contain play features and structures like this swing.

Lletty Wood, Radnorshire, Wales, is a wild place used for open access play provision, offering a wide range of activities and play in a staffed environment. The woodland accommodates camps and dens: an 'umbrella' camp with washing line, throne and fireplace; a 'fairy' camp created by a natural tree fall; a river camp, and a camp with a home-built earth oven. Though part-supervised, the site offers considerable freedom, and most of the activities which take place could easily occur in an unstaffed location.

Teenagers enjoying a sense of wilderness at Lletty Wood.

Section 3:
Design, specification and management issues

Chapter 5: Key design, specification and maintenance issues

Playable seating at Altab Ali Park

Chapter 5:
Key design, specification and maintenance issues

Laying out a new play space or transforming an existing one will involve thinking and making choices about a number of specific elements including:

- Boundaries and fencing
- Play equipment
- Providing natural elements for play
- Ground modelling
- Planting
- Natural features
- Impact absorbent surfacing
- Self-built play features
- Vandalism
- General maintenance

Boundaries and fencing

The decision about whether or not to put a fence or boundary round a play space will depend on many factors specific to the location and potential use of each site. Fenced boundaries around play spaces tend to make them feel segregated from their surroundings and there is a growing view that the presence of fencing can discourage some children from using the play space. Fencing can also imply that this is where children are meant to be – and that they only belong here, rather than elsewhere in the public domain. Internal fencing which separates different age groups is rarely needed and the removal of this will usually improve the feeling of the play space.

On the other hand, although there is no legal requirement or recommendation for fencing in industry standards, a barrier may sometimes be desirable. Parents and carers – especially of younger children – may appreciate the sense of security which a fenced boundary creates to keep their children safe from straying outside the play space or from dogs. However, there may be other more satisfactory ways of creating boundaries that add to the play value of the space and make it feel more pleasant to use. Planting a hedge; creating a change in level; siting the whole space in a shallow hollow in the ground; surrounding it with a low wall where people can also sit; the possibilities are numerous. Playworkers call this creating 'fuzzy edges'.

Though fences can be effective in keeping dogs out, on some sites owners have even taken advantage of the fencing to let their dogs run free inside the play spaces; on one site in east London, the training of fighting dogs inside play spaces was stopped quickly by the removal of the boundary fencing.

In many locations it should be possible to adopt a much more positive attitude to the management of dogs, than fencing them out, as has been done at Causewayhead Park. Here, play area fencing has been removed and the council has worked with the local community to promote responsible dog-ownership, resulting in dog owners having access to the whole park.

Questions about fencing:

- Does the site really need to be fenced in? If so – what is the purpose of the fence?
- Is a fence necessary or might another type of boundary be effective?
- What type of boundary would add play value and complement the look of the setting?
- How could the presence of dogs be dealt with positively on the site? For instance, could the local dog warden offer support?

The use and type of gates are also important considerations. Some play space inspectors recommend not using gates unless these are essential, as self-closing hinges can cause accidents.

Many older play spaces are located in the middle of an open space, surrounded only by a bare fenced boundary, with no tree or shrub planting. Sometimes the most useful way of improving an existing play space like this is to make improvements to its setting, especially the boundary treatment, rather than making changes to the play space itself.

At **Trefusis Park Playing Field** the edge of the new play space is marked not by a fence but by a change in level. This dry-stone wall or 'Cornish hedge' does an effective job in keeping dogs out but still encourages children and carers inside. Gates set into the wall allow access via a smooth level path but the stepping stones projecting from the wall invite the more adventurous to climb up into the park – then down again.

Trefusis Playing Field.

In locations where there is a busy road or other potential hazard, or where the space is catering for younger children or those who find it difficult to stay in one place and may be in danger if they do not, fencing or secure boundaries may be essential, but it is still possible to design this in a way that suits both the site and the needs of the children. At **Horsham Park** the fenced boundary round the large play space is set back so far from the equipment that it is barely noticeable. A new hedge has been planted alongside which further disguises it.

Horsham Park.

Play equipment

Questions about play equipment

- What play experiences do we want the equipment to offer?
- How will the equipment attract and engage disabled children?
- Are there any ways the flexibility of use can be extended?
- Is there scope for improving existing equipment, or its setting, to provide greater play value?

Be creative about placing equipment; some pieces, such as these slides, can work even better in pairs.

Children really enjoy using play equipment and all the challenges it offers. Playground equipment is particularly good at providing for more active play, including movement such as climbing, swinging, sliding and rotating, which are not easy to provide through other means. Good play spaces will provide a setting which enhances equipment and makes it even more fun to use. The presence of play equipment signals that children are welcome and that their play is encouraged and supported.

©Aileen Shackell

©Nicola Butler

©Aileen Shackell

Many items of equipment can be used by a wide age range, such as these revolving discs.

Careful choice is required in order to get equipment that offers a range of play opportunities and can be used flexibly by children of different ages and interests. When buying unfamiliar equipment it helps to get an understanding of its play value and potential if the designer and commissioner visit sites where it is already in use and can see how the equipment is being used by children. Equipment manufacturers can also advise on the best types of equipment for different play experiences and many are keen to try new designs and combinations of equipment.

The Association of Play Industries (API) is the trade association of equipment suppliers and manufacturers. Members of the API have been checked for reliability and offer a wide variety of types of products, as well as design advice. Manufacturers should be able to help the designer understand the role of industry standards, working with the designer on a risk-benefit assessment, especially when items in a play space do not comply strictly with the standards or are not covered by them.

The design-led approach to play space development helps ensure that each play space is unique, sometimes also including structures and equipment that are 'non-prescriptive' in their design, allowing for flexible use and creative, imaginative play.

Some designers have created their own bespoke equipment, usually to express a particular theme or design concept. The **Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground** is a good example of this, with the crocodile and pirate ship from the Peter Pan story both making an appearance in the play space. Though this can be very successful, it can also be a more costly way of achieving a scheme which feels unique, which may be more appropriate for 'destination' play spaces rather than local ones.

The Peter Pan story has inspired the layout for the Diana playground.

Most importantly, the play space should feel welcoming to all children. The publication *Can Play Will Play* (John and Wheway, 2004) shows that social barriers to disabled access can be greater than physical ones; staff training and attitudes are important in developing a 'welcoming' atmosphere.

There are now a number of specially designed pieces of 'accessible' equipment that are often popular with both disabled and non-disabled children, however equipment which is specially designed for disabled children can encourage segregation so should be used with care.

Equipment allowing flexible use, such as a swing, which can take many forms, or a 'wobble dish', can be preferable. *Inclusion by Design* (Goodridge, ed Douch, 2008) offers more detailed advice.

Things to remember in choosing equipment

- Locate equipment carefully in its setting as the right setting will enhance a piece of equipment considerably. Use the spaces between equipment positively.
- Include some equipment which can be used flexibly and is 'non-prescriptive' in its use.
- Choose equipment which helps make the play space inclusive: hammock swings, 'accessible roundabouts' and equipment which accommodates companion or helper, such as wide slides or big circulation platforms.

The addition here of a ditch and crossing points made the 'house' a lot more fun to use than before.

This 'hut' structure at **Waverley Park** had never been very popular, but the construction around it of a ditch with informal crossing-points gave it a new lease of life and made it much more fun to use than had previously been the case. This is a good example of how the right setting for equipment can greatly add to its play value.

Providing natural elements for play

Questions about including natural elements

- Can we increase the play value by adding water, natural ground coverings or features that react in wind?
- What risk-benefit assessments will we need to carry out?
- How will we factor-in maintenance issues?

Although water, sand and other natural ground coverings are sometimes found in designed play spaces, natural elements especially wind and fire are often under-exploited in play provision. Their use can add an exciting extra dimension to a play space and also extend the sensory aspects of the design. Risk–benefit assessment is essential if natural elements are to be included in a play space design.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Sand and water together make for a creative combination, especially when you add in planting too.

Earth: Children enjoy manipulating materials such as earth, grit and sand, or squelching in mud. Different forms of earth can be used as surfaces to extend the play opportunities offered.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Play spaces should be usable all year round, but there might be room for a muddy bit, somewhere?

Water: This has enormous potential for creative play, especially when combined with natural soft surfaces such as sand and grit. Water is a continual source of fascination for children of all ages. Paddling pools provide a magnetic draw for children. The 'village pump' is also popular: interactive, and child operated, it encourages co-operative and creative play.

© Stirling Council Play Services

An interactive 'village pump' has lots of potential for play and can be a more affordable option than more elaborate systems.

Things to remember about using water in play spaces

- Consider the sustainability of the feature:
  - Will you need to use chemicals?
  - How much water will be consumed?
  - What will be the water source – is a bore-hole possible?
  - Can you recycle the water (recycling systems tend to be very costly)?
  - Generally the more complex the system, the more expensive it will be to install and to maintain.
  - Do a cost-benefit analysis to work out what you really want.
  - Remember, if the water is likely to be drunk, it will need to be of suitable quality.
  - Consider that water conservation is becoming an important environmental issue.
- Design the play space so the area is usable out of season when the water is turned off. For instance paddling pools might accommodate 'low-key' wheeled play when they are empty in the winter.
- Staffing is not a legal requirement for paddling pools but many councils find a low-key staff presence in the general vicinity is reassuring.

Wind: Equipment which captures the power of wind is increasingly available; things which blow in the wind, and things which make a sound when the wind blows or when a child blows through them.

Fire: There is a strong case for trying to include fire pits on staffed, supervised sites more often than is the case, as children benefit enormously from the experience of engaging with fire in a controlled environment. Despite concerns about children setting uncontrolled fires, children and young people are likely to have more respect for fire if they encounter it more often in their daily life. Where appropriate, including a fire pit on staffed play sites used by older children and young people might mitigate against them making their own fires in places likely to cause damage and possibly danger.

Ground modelling

Questions on ground modelling

- What opportunities are there for changing ground levels within and around the site to increase the play value?
- What ground quality checks should we make that will affect the decision?

Good play spaces make the most of changes in level to help create a variety of spaces internally, and in doing so create places which invite exploration, and are not viewed in full from the entrance (offering no surprises). Ditches and hollows combined with mounds and hummocks all help to make a child's journey through the space far more interesting, as well as creating vantage points and secret hideaways. In helping to subdivide a site, ground modelling can also help make a small space feel much bigger.

Before excavating it is essential to check where the water table lies, to avoid unintentionally creating boggy areas. Think about how the site will be drained after new mounding has been created.

Mounding makes otherwise level spaces feel three-dimensional.

Children can't seem to resist rolling downhill.

Things to remember about ground modelling

- Gradients should be gentle enough to allow them to be playable – not so steep that you can not run up and down over them. Mounds also tend to attract BMX biking – assume this will happen and just accept a degree of wear and tear on grass as an inevitable consequence of a successful space.
- Balance mounds with hollows so that there is a sense of going down into the landscape. Try to include some paths which traverse the mounds. These are good for wheeled play and also exciting for wheelchair users.
- In some urban areas, ground is often 'made-up' with building rubble and even old tipped material and debris. Reducing levels in such areas can be more problematic so consider doing some ground investigations as part of the design process.

Planting

Questions about planting

- Can we use planting to increase the play value and enhance the setting?
- What information do we need to gather about the care and maintenance of planting in play areas?
- Where do we need to carry out risk–benefit assessments on proposed planting?

Trees, shrubs and even long grass all help give a play space character and can help integrate it with its surroundings. Planting can also provide enclosure, shade, screening, and help reduce erosion on slopes. Planting adds seasonal interest and visual variety to a space and can be one of the main ways of making it look different all year round. Plants add texture, scent and colour, and they also help attract butterflies, birds and other wildlife to the site.

But first and foremost, planting should be introduced for its play value, and should be seen as being something to be played with, so the playability of the planting should dictate its design.

Planting is the best way of introducing seasonal change into a play space – as here at the Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground.

Choose plants which are:

- fast growing
- easy to maintain
- resilient
- native species, if you want to encourage wildlife.

Avoid plants which:

- are uncomfortable to the touch (which have thorns, or leaves with sharp edges)
- contain substances that could irritate the skin
- are poisonous.

Willow can make structures of all kinds, such as this maze at Balmaha.

Plants which might be suitable for use in play spaces

Latin name	Common name	Features
Trees and shrubs		**Multi-stemmed and feathered trees may be better for climbing once mature**
Betula utilis jacquemontii	Birch	Paper-thin peeling bark, catkins
Buddleja davidii	Butterfly bush	Strongly scented flowers which attract butterflies
Corylus avellana	Hazel	Catkins, nuts
Pinus radiata	Monterey Pine	Soft bright green needles
Populus tremula	Aspen	Sound of wind through leaves, catkins
Salix alba	White willow	Vivid stem colours, good for making structures such as tunnels
Salix caprea	Pussy willow	Soft velvety catkins
Salix matsudana tortuosa	Corkscrew willow	Twisted stems
Grasses and bamboos		**Consider planting more invasive species inside barriers which will prevent spread of roots**
Arundo donax versicolor		A tall variegated grass
Briza maxima	Greater quaking grass	Seed heads and winter effect
Pleioblastus auricomus		Evergreen bamboo with purple stems and yellow leaves
Stipa gigantea	Golden Oats	Tall evergreen grass
Phyllostachys flexuosa	Zigzag bamboo	Very tall evergreen bamboo with zigzag stems; larger bamboos good for making wind chimes
Herbaceous and annuals		
Bergenia cordifolia	Elephant's ears	Tough leathery leaves
Hypericum calycinum	Rose of Sharon	Large yellow flowers, can be invasive
Lavandula spica/ angustifolia	English Lavender	Colour, scent, flower shape
Mentha spicata	Spearmint	Leaves to smell
Stachys byzantina	Lambs' ears	Silky leaves to stroke
Fragaria vesca	Wild strawberry	Colourful fruit
Lunaria annua	Honesty	Flowers and papery seed-heads

Things to remember about using planting in play spaces

- Use densely planted blocks of species in a simple layout, where possible with a barrier along the rear to discourage through traffic – woven willow fences are good and almost instant.
- Fast-growing, vigorous species are likely to establish more quickly but will prove harder to keep under control; seek a balance between vigour and ease of maintenance, bearing in mind the needs of a particular site. Freshly pruned shrubs and bamboo may be quite sharp, if this is the case consider installing temporary barriers till new softer growth appears.
- A change in level around the perimeter can help protect the beds from unwanted desire lines. Raised edges such as railway sleepers will help slow down movement towards the planting beds and could be used as a balance feature or even a seat.
- Large specimen shrubs and trees should be used in more vulnerable positions, and some boulders around these will help provide informal protection.
- Consider temporary protection for planting until it is established, perhaps for as much as two years after planting if the site is large enough to cope with these areas being out of bounds; stock-proof netting on timber posts is reasonably cheap but very robust.
- Where there is space, do not forget about areas of longer grass where meadow flowers can thrive, to provide a different texture.

© Aileen Shackell

Planting protected by a timber knee rail as well as boulders, and a change of level.

© Stirling Council Play Services

This quiet corner with long grass, wild flowers and boulders feels like a small piece of countryside in the city.

Plants for Play: A Plant Selection Guide for Children's Outdoor Environments (Moore, 2004) is a useful reference source for information on planting.

Natural features

Questions about natural play features

- How can we include natural features like boulders, logs or small dips in the ground to enhance the play value?
- Are there local organisations who might provide these features?
- What risk–benefit assessments will we need to undertake on natural play features?

Many children have little experience of the natural environment, and a good play space will allow access to natural objects and features in a managed, well-maintained setting, which will allow for a different range of play opportunities from those offered by conventional equipment. Boulders and logs make especially good informal balance features. As there are no specific industry standards for natural play features it will be necessary to undertake risk–benefit assessments on any features designed into the play area. As with risk assessments these should be proportionate; more information is available online at the Health and Safety Executive website.

Boulders can be obtained from stone suppliers or possibly from a local quarry if there is one in the area. For a more natural effect specify a range of sizes and bed them into the ground slightly. If the play space is in an area where there is a local stone, such as Yorkshire (sandstone) or Dorset (Portland stone) there may be a good case for using this, rather than another type, which may look out of place. Specify rounded boulders without sharp edges.

Even small logs can be a challenge for younger children.

Shallow ditches can be constructed which will form somewhere on the site to paddle after it rains; ditches should catch the water for a few hours before it is allowed to drain away (avoid long-term water retention, resulting in stagnant puddles). Once the water has disappeared then there is always mud to play with, too.

Fallen trees form wonderful climbing structures but need careful consideration. If trees in a play space are to be felled, consider keeping them there rather than removing them from the site, as the logistics of bringing felled trees onto the site are considerable. When using felled trees on a play space a number of issues will need to be considered.

Considerations when using felled trees in play spaces

Source	Liaise with the local Arboricultural Officer to find out if there are any trees planned for removal which might be suitable. Review the tree in situ and plan how to fell it so that it is the right size and shape for climbing.
Specification	Think about the approximate diameter and length, and make sure that it is big enough to be worth climbing. Specify that some branches should be left on (shortened) – a tree trunk with no branches will have limited play value.
Transport	Find out what the options are for transporting a tree to the site. You may need to transport the tree in two sections then install them butted-up close to each other on site, to give the impression of a whole tree.
Accessories	You may want to add climbing nets, or ropes.
Surfacing	A risk-benefit assessment should be undertaken to establish the type of surfacing best for the site. If existing ground cover, such as grass, is deemed un-suitable, loose fill natural material, such as play bark, or sand/grit may be most appropriate.
Maintenance	Review the condition regularly and modify the maintenance to take account of the ageing process – for example the difference between the tree with a bark surface, and one where the bark has fallen off leaving a very smooth surface underneath.
Risk–benefit assessment	Undertake and record a systematic risk–benefit assessment.

Fallen trees make good climbing structures, but make sure you leave plenty of branches still attached.

Things to remember about natural features

- If a natural feature is perceived to potentially present a significant risk of harm to people, there is a legal requirement to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, the detail being proportionate to the risk, and to act on the findings. Risk-benefit assessment will help ensure that the play value of such features is taken into account - alongside the risks – leading to a more balanced judgement.
- Take time at design development stage to explain the play value in items such as boulders, as some users will not have seen these used inside play spaces before and may worry about children hurting themselves on them.
- Natural features may age and weather more quickly than man-made ones, so remember to review items regularly to check they are still suitable for use.

Impact absorbent surfacing

Questions on surfacing

- Which sections of the play space, if any, require impact absorbing surfacing?
- Which type of surfacing will add play value as well as comply with European and British standards?
- How can we balance the play value advantages with the maintenance requirements?

Choosing surfacing

Selection of surfaces is an important issue and can, without careful consideration, use a significant proportion of the play space budget. For several decades the dominant factor in choosing surfaces, at least around equipment, has been safety in the event of falls from a height. Impact absorbent surfacing is also often used as a general surface treatment around equipment to avoid the erosion and muddy patches, which tend to characterise small areas of heavily trafficked grass. It also helps to maintain play spaces in a usable condition all year round.

However, there are many other factors, including cost, which should be considered when making the choice, some of which are listed on pages 86–87.

Standards and surfacing

The European Standards covering impact absorbent (also known as impact attenuating) surfacing (IAS) and equipment were revised in 2008 as follows:

- EN 1176 – Playground equipment and surfacing (all the requirements/recommendations for the provision of surfaces – some were previously covered in EN 1177)
- EN 1177 – Impact attenuating playground surfacing –determination of critical fall height (now just giving methods of testing).

Although there has been a trend in the UK to use rubber surfacing, either tiles or wet-pour, there are signs that more natural surfaces, such as various kinds of loose-fill, and grass and earth, are becoming more fashionable for a number of reasons. The British Standards Institution (BSI), which is responsible for publishing the standard in the UK has suggested that grass is suitable for fall heights up to 1.5 metres (previously this was set at 1.0 metres), subject to a risk assessment (BSI, 2008).

At Trefusis Playing Fields smooth concrete and tarmac areas were specially designed into the scheme for wheeled play.

Clarifying the function of surfacing

Loose-fill surfaces have high play value in terms of quiet, creative play. Bound surfaces, especially wet-pour, have great potential for wheeled play and general high speed games.

Once it has been decided what activities are to be catered for, the potential levels of usage should be estimated. High levels of usage on sites where there is little 'slack space' and where there is a high density of equipment will not be suitable for grass, which is vulnerable to erosion. However, a sand or grit surface might be a possibility in more intensively used spaces to provide a soft surface around equipment – perhaps combined with hard surfaced paths (or paths in a rubber surface) to provide scope for wheeled play and to improve access for those with impaired mobility.

The advantages and disadvantages of different types of surfacing are summarised in the table on pages 86–87.

Loose-fill surfacing

Loose-fill surfacing, for example sand or bark chip, can offer children greater play value than more solid surfaces and can be much simpler and cheaper to maintain than most people believe. In many cases it is a better, more play-friendly solution than other impact absorbing surfacing. However, it is important to remember to design access for delivery of sand or grit, or other loose-fill, into the layout of the play space.

Grit (actually coarse sand) offers many similar properties to sand, but being a heavier material is less likely to be displaced. Grit sourced locally from a quarry in Fauldhouse, Fife and consisting of small gravel chips measuring around 1 to 3mm in diameter has been used extensively by **Stirling Council**.

The children are playing in sand but the darker surface to the rear is grit.

Sand safety surfacing has great potential for creative play.

Ease of maintenance should not take priority over play value in play space design and should never be the primary driver. Animal fouling and buried, hazardous debris, such as syringes or broken glass can be common worries. However the experience of those authorities that use loose-fill materials on a widespread basis suggests that these are relatively rare occurrences and that appropriate maintenance is affordable and effective.

> **In 17 years of inspecting I have yet to see a syringe on a playground (nearby, yes, but not on): it is rare.**
> **(Wheway, 2007)**

The maintenance of loose-fill surfaces should be tailored to the site. In areas of higher usage, risks of unwanted debris finding its way into sand or bark chip might be higher than in a quieter area, in which case more regular inspections should be made. There is a prevailing view that sand 'must' be raked every day – this is unlikely to be necessary anywhere, and would

Sand safety surfacing which contains leaves and other organic 'debris' is perfectly acceptable in a play space.

be a prohibitively expensive operation to undertake regularly.

Some play providers avoid using loose-fill surfaces because they consider the risks from dangerous debris to be too high, however experience suggests that this reaction is disproportionate, given the low incidence of such debris and the very high play benefits of providing loose-fill.

Loose-fill surfaces can be prone to displacement – on windier sites sand will be blown away and will need topping up far more frequently than on a site which is more sheltered from wind. High levels of usage on a site will also entail more regular topping up.

Things to remember about surfacing

- Choose the best surface for the activities planned – not always the cheapest or easiest surface to maintain. A good choice of surfacing will add play value to a scheme.
- Loose-fill surfaces such as sand and grit are high in play value but not for wheeled play.
- Natural loose-fill surfaces can seem messy to parents and carers more familiar with rubber bound surfaces, so take plenty of time at the design development stage to explain the play value of natural materials to potential users.
- Bound rubber surfaces such as wet-pour can help introduce colour to a play space, and perhaps markings for games. Wet pour can also be used to form mounds.
- Grass can be considered for surfacing in some situations, though high levels of usage mean that it will be worn away, leaving bare soil, which may not be practical in all situations. In very busy play areas, where space is tight, it might be more appropriate to use sand or grit rather than trying to maintain a grass surface.
- Industry standards on the safety aspects of surfacing are available in EN 1176 and EN 1177. Further guidance on risk-benefit assessment can be found in the *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide* (DCSF and Play England, 2008).

Rubber bound surfacing is great for bikes – and can be used to create both hilly and level play areas.

Self-built play features

Rather than being too prescriptive about which activities are and are not allowed in a play space, clients should try to accommodate some flexibility of usage. Systematically assessing the degree of potential risk against the benefits and play value that children's self-built play features can offer, should lead to a balanced judgement about whether or not these should be automatically removed.

Children building a den at Bedgebury National Pinetum, Kent.

Freedom to construct their own 'play features' is something increasingly few children experience. Here at **Bedgebury National Pinetum**, in Kent, the combination of 'slack space' – space with no pre-determined function – and a welcoming attitude on the part of the site managers makes this a common place occurrence.

Vandalism

Fear of vandalism, like fear of crime, is often greater than the reality. For instance, play providers are often reluctant to consider installing timber play equipment in areas where arson is problematic, although there are very few incidences of such equipment being destroyed by fire.

> **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)**

Good quality play spaces that meet users' needs (designed with the involvement of potential users), and which make links with the local youth strategy are less likely to be vandalised than play spaces that are just designed to be 'indestructible'.

The advantages and disadvantages of different types of safety surface

Surface	Advantages	Disadvantages	Cost
Grass	Readily available Environmentally friendly Vandal resistant Likely to be better for drainage than bound surfaces, dependent on soil types and water table	Very vulnerable to erosion and wear Regular maintenance required Impact absorbency will vary depending on soil types and conditions On new sites there may be an issue with debris rising to the surface	Very low
Play bark	Can be sustainably sourced Very good impact absorbency Low friction for those with restricted mobility Vandal resistant Easy inspection of foundations Good for drainage	Higher maintenance costs; will need regular topping up Can get dirty Poor for wheelchair access Poor visibility of debris Can leave foundations exposed Will need membrane underneath and also a retaining edge which could potentially impede drainage	Medium
Play wood chips	As bark but less dirty Wheelchair access easier Good for drainage	As bark but with some possibility of splinters	Low
Play sand	Good impact absorbency Can be sustainably sourced Vandal resistant Low friction for those with restricted movement Good for drainage	Higher maintenance costs (will need topping up as prone to migration) Abrasive effect will increase wear on equipment Impact absorbency reduces when wet (or frozen) Poor for wheelchair access Poor visibility of debris Can leave foundations exposed	Medium
Grit	As sand Works well used alongside sand as a contrasting texture	As sand but less prone to migration Need to specify carefully to ensure that the materials are not able to combine to form a solid mass.	Medium
Pea shingle	Excellent impact absorbency Vandal resistant Easy inspection of foundations Good for drainage	Children can throw it around Poor for wheelchair access Poor visibility of debris Can leave foundations exposed	Low

Surface	Advantages	Disadvantages	Cost
Wet-pour	Low maintenance Resistant to wear in daily use Good for wheelchair access Easy visibility of debris on surface Can be used to surface mounds Long life span Coloured graphics and ground-based games can be included	Difficult to inspect foundations May increase surface water run-off compared to loose-fill materials though wet-pour systems are generally porous High capital outlay and expensive to repair or replace Can be ignited if a bonfire is constructed on the surface (but otherwise should meet flammability test in BS 7188) May contain materials which need special disposal Potential for friction burns	High
Rubber tiles	Resistant to wear in daily use Good for wheelchair access Easy visibility of debris on surface Can help add colour to a site Inspection of foundations easier than wet-pour	Difficult to inspect foundations As wet-pour but tiles can be lifted by severe vandalism or poor laying	High
Grass mats (mats that grass can grow through)	Good for drainage Integrates well with natural landscape, especially grass areas Suitable for use on both flat and sloping areas. They will help protect the underlying grass from erosion in higher wear areas Easy to repair	Difficult to inspect foundations Grass will not grow uniformly and some may consider the appearance untidy Best used in areas where original ground levels are maintained, otherwise localised settlement can be an issue Can be lifted around the edges so extra fixings should be specified if vandalism is likely to occur Some lower cost products may have lower levels of fire resistance	Medium
Play mats (designed for use over hard standing)	Good for drainage Low cost solution allows for retention of existing hard standing Can include coloured tiles Can be lifted and re-laid elsewhere if necessary Easy to repair	Difficult to inspect foundations	Medium
Artificial grass	As wet pour but also fire resistant (should be tested to BS 7188) Can create impression of grass in areas where grass would not be feasible	Difficult to inspect foundations Expensive in terms of capital outlay and also maintenance costs	Medium

General maintenance

Play spaces which are designed to have as much emphasis on the setting as on the equipment will be slightly more complex to maintain than the traditional model of playground. The inclusion of more hard and soft landscape elements will mean that there will be a need for different maintenance operations to be carried out, whereas previously, maintenance might have been focused largely on routine equipment inspections.

The maintenance and management of play spaces should, however, be seen in the context of the significant additional play value that these types of play spaces offer.

Whilst the maintenance and management implications should always be considered and adequately resourced at the design stage, these should not detract from the provision of maximum play value.

Section 4:
Further information

Chapter 6: Where to go for help

Chapter 7: Bibliography and sources

Rolling down-hill at Darnley Park.

Chapter 6:
Where to go for help

Background research

Visit play spaces

Site visits to see what has been done elsewhere can be an invaluable part of research for clients, commissioners, designers and also useful for community engagement, especially for those schemes where you are trying a new approach. Seeing sandy surfaces or unfenced equipment being used successfully can go a long way to demystifying new approaches to play space design, especially if it is possible to talk to someone who deals with maintenance on a day-to-day basis.

Consider visiting some of the sites described in this guide. A great deal can be learned from experiencing a place 'in the flesh'. Contact details are given at the back of this document, or contact the Free Play Network for further information on these schemes.

There are many sites in continental Europe that are also worth visiting, particularly in Germany and Scandinavia. Berlin has a large number of interesting school sites – the ideas they have implemented are by no means specific to an educational environment. Play equipment companies with European or Scandinavian operations sometimes organise trips to see equipment being manufactured and sites where it has been installed.

Web research

If it is not possible to visit other play spaces in person then web research is a good second port of call (though not a substitute). Sites that might be helpful include:

Association of Play Industries (API)
www.api-play.org

Big Lottery Fund
www.biglottery.org.uk

CABE Space
www.cabe.org.uk

Children's Play Information Service
www.ncb.org.uk/cpis

Department for Children, Schools and Families
www.dcsf.gov.uk

Fields in Trust
www.fieldsintrust.org

Free Play Network
www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk

KIDS
www.kids-online.org.uk

Landscape Institute
www.landscapeinstitute.org

Health and Safety Executive
www.hse.gov.uk

Play England
www.playengland.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
www.rospa.com

Sustrans
www.sustrans.org.uk

Websites offering information on sustainable construction

Waste & Resources Action Programme: WRAP helps individuals, businesses and local authorities to reduce waste and recycle more, making better use of resources and helping to tackle climate change. They are funded by the Department for Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
www.wrap.org.uk/construction/index.html

The UK Green Building Council - a means of contacting knowledgeable organisations rather than a list of materials, products and suppliers: Their mission is to dramatically improve the sustainability of the built environment, by radically transforming the way it is planned, designed, constructed, maintained and operated.
www.ukgbc.org

Green Building magazine is also full of information, and its Green Building Link Network contains many links:
www.greenbuildingpress.co.uk/links/

Helpful literature

There is a large body of literature available – check the bibliography in this guide for a full list of the sources that have been used for this publication. Organisations such as **CABE Space** and **Play England** have a large number of very useful publications, many of them free to community groups, and their websites will have a list of these. Key resources are listed below.

- *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit* (Children's Play Council, 2006)
- Mayor of London *Supplementary Planning Guidance* (Greater London Authority, 2008)
- *Planning and design for outdoor sport and play* ('The Six Acre Standard') (Fields in Trust, 2008)
- *Play Indicators Quality Assessment Tool* (Play England, 2008)
- *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide* (DCSF and Play England, 2008)

- *It's our space: a guide for community groups working to improve public space* (CABE Space, 2007)
- *Spaceshaper* (CABE Space, 2007)

Practical help

Check your own local authority

Your own council officers will be the first port of call. The following departments may be able to play a role in your project: Play Services; Youth Services; Development Control; Parks; Regeneration Teams; Leisure Services; and Procurement, which is often key to any schemes that are developed.

Find a designer

A designer's involvement is crucial in creating good quality play spaces.

Check schemes that have been created locally to see if they are based on ideas or concepts that may be useful. Don't just look at play spaces, check other schemes such as parks and public spaces, as well as those on housing estates.

Your local authority may have in-house landscape architects. If not, then check the Landscape Institute website which has a directory of practices. Though few of these will list play as a specialist work area, it is worth contacting local practices to see if they can help. The Children's Play Information Service also has a list of play designers and consultants.

Many equipment suppliers provide a design service. Their designers specialise in the design of play spaces and so have a good understanding of children's play. Some of these designers will also be skilled in landscape design too.

Whatever route you follow to choose your designer, remember to check that they have the skills and experience to adopt the landscape design-led approach advocated here. Use this guide to help develop a design brief for the project to be undertaken, and visit examples of the designer's or supplier's work, as well as speaking to other clients who may have used them before coming to a decision.

If there are no designers available locally, then check the websites listed above for possible sources of help from other areas.

Chapter 7:
Bibliography and sources

Bibliography

Ball, D J (2002) *Playgrounds – risks, benefits, and choices*. Sudbury: HSE Books (free download from HSE website).

Beunderman, J, Hannon, C, and Bradwell, P (2007) *Seen and Heard: Reclaiming the public realm with children and young people*. London: Demos.

BSI (2008) BS 7188 *Impact Absorbing playground surfacing – performance requirements and test methods.* British Standards Institute, pending publication.

CABE Space (2004) *What Would You Do With This Space? Involving young people in the design and care of urban spaces*. London: CABE Space.

Children's Play Council (2003) *More Than Swings and Roundabouts: Planning for outdoor play*. London: National Children's Bureau.

Children's Play Council (2006) *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit CD-ROM – Create, Organise, Sustain*. London: National Children's Bureau.

Children's Play Council (2006) *Planning for Play: Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy*. London: National Children's Bureau and Big Lottery Fund.

Children's Play Council, National Playing Fields Association, and PLAYLINK (2000) *Best Play: What play provision should do for children*. London: National Playing Fields Association.

Clamp, H (1995) *Spon's Landscape Contract Handbook*. Aldershot: Gower Technical.

CLG (2002) *Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*, London: Communities and Local Government.

Cole-Hamilton, I, and Gill, T (2002) *Making the Case for Play – Building policies and strategies for school-aged children.* London: National Children's Bureau.

Coleman, N (2007) Free Play Network interview with Neil Coleman, Wycombe District Council, Buckinghamshire

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

DCMS (2004) *Getting Serious About Play: A review of children's play*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

DCSF (2007a) *The Children's Plan: Building brighter futures*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

DCSF (2008a) *Fair Play – A consultation on the play strategy*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

DCSF (2008b) *Children's Services Local Authority Circular – LAC Ref: 0506080003: Conditions of Grant and Guidance 2008-09*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

DCSF (2007b) *Staying Safe: A consultation document*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

DCSF (2008c) *Staying Safe Action Plan*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

DCSF and Play England (2008) *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide.* London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Department for Victorian Communities, State of Victoria, Australia (2007) *The Good Play Space Guide: 'I can play too'*. Melbourne: Department for Victorian Communities.

DfT (2007) *Manual for Streets*. London: Department for Transport.

Dobson F (2003) Speech at ILAM Play Seminar.

Fields in Trust (2008) *Planning and design for outdoor sport and play* ('The Six Acre Standard') (pending publication.)

Free Play Network and PLAYLINK (2006), Places for Play, Photo Exhibition, www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk.

Gill, T (March 2007) '*Can I play out…?' Lessons from London Play's Home Zones project.* London: London Play.

Ginsburg, K (2007) *The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds*. Clinical Report: American Academy of Paediatrics.

Goodridge, C edited by Douch, P (2008) *Inclusion by Design – A guide to creating accessible play and childcare environments.* London: KIDS.

Greater London Authority (2008) *Supplementary Planning Guidance: Providing for children and young people's play and informal recreation.* London: Mayor of London.

Groundwork Wakefield (2007) *Upton Play Appraisal 2006 – 2010: Creating a child friendly community.* Wakefield: Groundwork.

HSE (2007) *Construction (Design & Management) Regulations*. Health and Safety Executive. Available online at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/ (date accessed May 2008).

HSE (2007a) *Five steps to risk assessment*. Available online at: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm (date accessed May 2008).

HSE (2007b) *Sensible risk management*. Available online at: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/principles.htm (date accessed May 2008).

Hughes, B (1996) *A Playworkers Taxonomy of Play Types*. London: PLAYLINK.

John, A and Wheway, R (2004) *Can Play Will Play: Disabled children and access to outdoor playgrounds*. London: National Playing Fields Association.

Lester, S and Maudsley, M (2007) *Play Naturally: a review of children's natural play*. London: Play England/National Children's Bureau.

Machell, R (2006) Counsel Opinion. *Leisure Manager – Risk, play and policy – Counsel Opinion*. London: PLAYLINK.

Melville, S (2004) *Places for Play*. London: PLAYLINK.

Moore, R (2004) *Plants for Play: A Plant Selection Guide for Children's Outdoor Environments*. California: MIG Communications

Nebelong, H (2002) Presentation to the Designs on Play Conference. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/design/nebelong.htm

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003) *Developing Accessible Play Space – a good practice guide*. Available online at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/developingaccessibleplay2 (date accessed June 2008).

Packard, S (2007) Speech by Simeon Packard, Places to Play Seminar, Play England.

Play England (2007a) *Charter for Children's Play*. London: National Children's Bureau.

Play England (2007b) *Playday survey: ICM poll*, London: Play England (www.playday.org.uk)

Play England (2008) *Play Indicators Quality Assessment Tool*. London: National Children's Bureau (pending publication).

Play Safety Forum (2002) *Managing Risk in Play Provision. A position statement*. London: National Children's Bureau.

PLAYLINK (2006), Negligence, play and legal opinion (Counsel Opinion by Raymond Machell QC).

Rimmer, K (2007) Free Play Network interview with Keith Rimmer, Walsall Local Authority.

Stirling Council (2004) *Play and Informal Recreation Areas, Development Advice Note*. Stirling: Stirling Council.

Stirling Council (2007) *Inside Out and Outside In*. Stirling: Stirling Council.

Sustainable Development Commission (2007) *Every Child's Future Matters*. London: Sustainable Development Commission.

Sustrans (2008) *DIY Streets*. London: Sustrans. www.sustrans.org.uk/diystreets (date accessed June 2008).

Thom, B, Sales, R and Pearce, J J (2007) *Growing up with risk*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Wheway, R and Millward, A (1997) *Child's Play: Facilitating play on housing estates*. London: Chartered Institute of Housing.

Wheway, R (2007) Interview with Free Play Network, Child Accident Prevention Trust. November 2007.

Worpole, K (2003) *No Particular Place to Go? Children, young people and public space*. London: Groundwork.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary

Appendix 2: Index of sites referred to in text

Appendix 3: Case studies

Summer meadow at Balmaha Play Landscape.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Ball games area An area designed and designated specifically for football, basketball, and other ball games.

Commissioner The person officially authorised to lead the process for creating a new play space, often referred to as the client.

Consultation A process of mutual exchange of information regarding the project between the commissioning body and potential users and stakeholders.

Design and build A process which unites the design and construction stages, led by the equipment supplier/manufacturer or contractor.

Design brief A document which encapsulates key project information (factual, conceptual and inspirational) to inform the design process.

Designated play space A place which has been designated specifically for children's play, and which has play as its principal function.

Doorstep provision A play space within sight of home, where children can play within view of known adults.

Engagement The process by which the commissioning body or client relates to the potential users and stakeholders of the proposed play space to secure their active involvement in the project development process (compare with Consultation).

FSC-approved wood – timber approved by the Forestry Stewardship Council as being from a sustainable source.

Garden designer A designer who focuses on working on gardens.

Genius loci The spirit of the place (Latin term).

Ground modelling The process by which the relief features or surface configuration of an area are altered (such as the introduction of hills and mounds, or excavation of ditches). Also known as landform.

Hazard A hazard is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, broken glass, a frayed rope, an unseen sharp object etc.

Home zones A home zone is a street or group of streets where pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles share the space on equal terms, with cars travelling at little more than walking pace.

Impact absorbing surfacing (IAS) Surfacing used primarily to mitigate the impact of falling from a height. Also commonly referred to as safety or safer surfacing and known as Impact Attenuating Surfacing.

Inclusive play space Play provision that is accessible and welcoming to disabled and non-disabled children.

Industry Standards: Europe-wide standards for the safety of play equipment and surfacing. Standards revised in 2008 as follows:

EN1176 – Playground equipment and surfacing (all the requirements/recommendations for the provision of surfaces, though previously some were in EN1177)

EN1177 – Impact attenuating playground surfacing – determination of critical height (now just methods of testing).

Landscape architect The chartered title for a professional person trained in the planning, designing and managing of open spaces in cities, towns and the countryside. Only a full Member of the Landscape Institute (MLI) may use the title Chartered Landscape Architect, which is a designation protected by law.

Landscape designer A person with experience and understanding of designing landscapes and open spaces; can include artists.

Loose-fill surfacing Loose, as opposed to bound, surfacing, such as sand, grit or bark chip.

Multiple-age use Play spaces or equipment designed and intended to be used flexibly, by children and young people of different ages.

Multi-functional use Play spaces which are designed and intended to be used flexibly, to have an additional function to that of play.

Playable space A place where children can play that is not specifically designated for play, and which does not have play as its principal or only function.

Play space A place that is designated primarily for children's play, including playgrounds and recreation grounds. (Note: this term is used throughout this publication in preference to the term play area, which implies a more well-defined boundary, which is not necessarily appropriate in all cases.)

Play space designer A person with experience and understanding of designing for children and play.

Play types The different ways that children play. Developed originally by Bob Hughes, refer to bibliography.

Play value The range and quality of play opportunities and experiences offered by a play environment.

Procurement The term commonly used by most local authorities for the process of buying equipment or playgrounds.

Recycled materials This term is intended to cover items of play equipment, surfacing or other built or landscape features containing a proportion of recycled or reused content, such as paths or seats made out of recycled plastic or reclaimed timber. The aim of using recycled materials is to reduce the amount of new natural resources, energy and waste involved in the production process.

Refurbishment Re-development of an existing play area.

Risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by a hazard, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

Risk assessment The process of identifying hazards and evaluating the risks to health and safety arising from these hazards, taking account of existing and proposed controls.

Risk–benefit assessment The process of identifying the risks and benefits of things or activities and deciding the appropriate strategy.

Safety surfacing Refer to Impact absorbing surfacing.

Section 106 agreements Funding from developers secured by local authorities as part of the planning process for new developments, intended to mitigate negative impacts of the proposed development. Also referred to as planning gain.

Shared space Space which is designed for flexible use by different user groups simultaneously.

Slack space Space without any pre-defined function or layout, included within play spaces to extend the flexibility of the space, for children to use as they please.

Sustainably sourced materials The term is intended to cover items that are obtained through production processes that can be continued indefinitely without damage to the environment or adverse impacts on local communities, for example timber harvested from accredited sustainably managed forests.

Teenage space A place designed primarily for teenage users. Also known as a youth space.

Urban designer A designer who focuses on the design of the built environment.

Wet-pour Bound rubber safety surfacing which forms a continuous sealed surface.

Wheel park/wheeled play An area for activities on wheels such as skateboarding, rollerblading and BMX biking.

Appendix 2: Index of sites referred to in text

Abbey Orchard Community Garden, LB Westminster

Allens Gardens Play Area, LB Hackney

Altab Ali Park, LB Tower Hamlets

Balmaha Play Landscape, Stirling Council

Bedgebury National Pinetum, Kent

Causewayhead Park, Stirling Council

Chapelfield Play Area, Cowie, Stirling Council

Climbing Forest, Coombe Abbey Country Park, Coventry City Council

Cowley Teenage Space, LB Lambeth

Crown Lakes Country Park, Peterborough

Cutsyke Play Forest, Castleford, West Yorkshire

Darnley Park, Stirling Council

Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Dilkes Park, Thurrock District Council

The Dings Home Zone, Bristol City Council

Hampton, Peterborough

Horsham Park, Horsham District Council

Invermead Close Playable Space, LB Hammersmith and Fulham

Langdon Park, LB Tower Hamlets

Lletty Wood, Radnorshire, Wales

Mast House Terrace Youth Space, LB Tower Hamlets

Milton Keynes Bus Station Skate Park

Peterborough BMX area, Peterborough City Council

Provost's Park, Gargunnock, Stirling Council

Priory Park Play Area and Skate Park, Reigate and Banstead District Council

Russell Square, LB Camden

Spa Fields Park and Play Space, LB Islington

Spacemakers Youth Space, Bristol City Council

South Bank Centre forecourt, LB Lambeth

Telegraph Hill Park, LB Lewisham

Trefusis Playing Field, Kerrier District Council

Upton Village, West Yorkshire

Waverley Park , Stirling Council

Wyvis Street Play Space, LB Tower Hamlets

Appendix 3: Case Studies

Abbey Orchard Community Garden, Westminster

Balmaha Play Landscape, Stirling

Bus Station Skate Park, Milton Keynes

Causewayhead Park, Stirling

Climbing Forest, Coombe Abbey Country Park, Coventry

Chapelfield Play Area, Cowie, near Stirling

Cowley Teenage Space, Lambeth

Cutsyke Play Forest, Castleford

Darnley Park, Stirling

Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Dilkes Park, Thurrock

Horsham Town Play Space, Horsham

Invermead Close, Hammersmith and Fulham

Langdon Park, Tower Hamlets

Mast House Terrace Youth Space, Tower Hamlets

Priory Park Play Area and Skate Park, Reigate

Provost's Park, Gargunnock, Stirling

Spa Fields Park and Play Space, Islington

Spacemakers Youth Space, Bristol

Telegraph Hill Park, Lewisham

Trefusis Playing Fields, Redruth

Waverley Park, Stirling

Wyvis Street Play Space, Tower Hamlets

Stirling Council: organisational case study

Abbey Orchard Community Garden, Westminster

Client:	**Peabody Trust**
Location:	**Abbey Orchard Road, Westminster, City of Westminster**
Designers:	**Farrer Huxley Associates**
Project timescale:	**2001–04**
Capital cost:	**Approximately £600,000**
Funding:	**Peabody Trust**

Remodelling of this small internal courtyard space was completed in 2004, in association with major repairs to sub-surface drainage. Led by landscape architects' practice Farrer Huxley Associates, the scheme's brief focused on recreating a garden for residents to include an enclosed ball games area (5-a-side scale) along with play facilities aimed (notionally) at children aged between 6 and 12. The design was informed by the site history, and signage at the main entrance makes this explicit with a reference to the 'monk's vineyard and orchard'. Consultation was carried out with residents, including children on the estate.

The courtyard had been used previously as a car park, ball court and traditional style playground, leaving little space for more general recreation. The new layout makes good use of existing sight lines through the courtyard, and entrances into the space are aligned with the outer entrances into the courtyard area itself.

The ball games area is laid out on a diagonal axis, which adds a sense of movement to the underlying geometry of the space and means that it dominates the space less than it might have done otherwise. Recessed slightly to reduce noise from ball games, it forms a space in its own right. The play equipment sits informally alongside the ball games area in an area of wet-pour surfacing, and a number of oversized sculptures of fruit (apples and pears) sit at locations around the garden, helping to reinforce the historic concept underlying the layout. A hornbeam hedge and planted borders help to define the courtyard and to baffle noise.

A question remains over how feasible it is to introduce a ball games facility of this scale and kind into such a high density housing area, on a site where space is at a premium. Noise remains an issue, and the ball court fencing has been upgraded to reduce rattle.

The scheme is drawing young people from outside the immediate courtyard and estate, and some residents feel that these users discourage children and adults who live on the estate from using the space, identifying the need for better provision in other areas.

Creating a new landscape to meet the needs of a large number of residents of all ages in a limited space is difficult, and inevitably decisions can be made that have left some people disenchanted.

For more information, contact:
Landscape Regeneration Manager, Asset Management, Peabody Trust,
45 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB, tel: 020 7021 4422, www.peabody.org.uk
Farrer Huxley Associates, London office , Unit 4, Union Wharf, 23 Wenlock Road,
London N1 7ST, tel 020 7490 3625, fax 020 7490 3626, www.fha.co.uk.

© Farrer Huxley Associates

The layout has been carefully designed to emphasise pedestrian routes through the garden.

© Farrer Huxley Associates

Aerial view of garden.

© Aileen Shackell

Giant fruit sculptures provide informal play opportunities.

© Aileen Shackell

Play equipment between the ball games area and shrub beds.

Balmaha Play Landscape
Stirling

Client:	**Stirling Council**
Location:	**Balmaha, Loch Lomond**
Designers:	**Judi Legg, Play Space Designer, and Mike Hyatt, Landscape Architect**
Project timescale:	**Main contract completed in 2004, but work continues**
Capital cost:	**£45,000**
Funding:	**Stirling Council; Stirling Landfill Tax Trust; Leader Plus (European funding); Scottish Natural Heritage; Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park; Stirling Council Local Community Development Fund**

Balmaha Play Landscape is situated near the shore of Loch Lomond next to a Visitors' Centre. It attracts a mixture of regular local users and visitors to the area. The main impetus for the design of this new play space was the connection between land and water and the way that people through history have lived in the local environment.

The central area represents a beach as the focus where water and land meet, where boats are hewn from mature trees and launched to fish the plentiful waters. The stilted structure echoes the ancient crannogs, which were built out into the water as living spaces where families, livestock and belongings could be defended. At low water, remains of ancient crannogs can still be seen on Loch Lomond. Local artists and craftspeople contributed to the design and construction of the play landscape, in the dugout canoes, the willow maze and the turfed stone wall.

Balmaha sits in one of the most naturally beautiful and bio-diverse areas of Scotland, yet children are often separated from it. The 'play area' is designed to be an integral part of the landscape, giving opportunity for children to experience and care for their environment.

There is a deliberate avoidance of standard play equipment in favour of mounds, dips, copses, wetland, and special places to allow the children to operate in a more authentic 'natural' environment. The use of the existing changes in level, of natural materials and undulating surfaces aims to provide a stimulating landscape, where children can experience the irregularity of life, and develop the real skills and abilities to assess risk. The play area is unfenced, blending naturally into the surrounding area and welcoming all comers. The design aims to create a play landscape that is a space that adults will enjoy sharing with their children whether they are local residents or visitors.

This project was supported in important ways by the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. Its strong community development programme led to local community initiation of this project and sustained involvement with its development.

For more information, contact:
Children's Services – Play Services, Stirling Council, Unit 12, Back O'Hill Industrial Estate, Back O'Hill Road, Stirling , FK8 1SH, tel 01786 430120, play@stirling.gov.uk
Sue Gutteridge, Play Consultancy, tel 0131 662 9984, suegutteridge@btinternet.com.

Carved longboats at Balmaha.

The hammock, Balmaha Play Space.

Equipment nicely located, close to a tree.

A fallen tree encourages jumping as well as climbing.

Bus Station Skate Park
Milton Keynes

Client:	**Milton Keynes Council**
Location:	**Milton Keynes**
Designer:	**Richard Ferrington and Rob Selley**
Project timescale:	**Design started in early 2004 with construction taking place between January and March 2005**
Capital cost:	**£115,000**
Funding:	**English Partnerships and Milton Keynes Council with additional funding provided by EBMK.**

Years of use by street sport enthusiasts had taken their toll on the city's infrastructure. Street sport enthusiasts were as concerned about the levels of damage as the authorities – they had never set out to vandalise the objects they use, and were keen to see them enhanced and protected.

An area at the former Central Bus Station was identified as a possible location for facilities, and negotiations took place with building owners English Partnerships. The space was already legendary in the street sport community, and had been skated for many years since its construction in 1980. A key concern was to create a new facility without losing its familiar feeling and quality. The heritage of the place had to be respected, and the local street identity needed to be reflected in the overall design.

An innovative approach was needed to engage members of the street sport community. Branding and communication were important strands. Using techniques established in street subculture – email, texting and logos (tags) – a communication and branding framework was devised. The SK8MK 'brand' was instrumental in holding the process together. The SK8MK message, 'Your city, Your sport, Your future, Get involved', encouraged people from the street sport community to participate in the process.

The new facility was purpose-built as a 'street style' facility, which recreates the environment and furniture of street skating. It is constructed from concrete, granite, terrazzo tiles and stainless steel. The robustness of the materials, combined with the smooth surfaces they offer, provide a very good play value for skateboarding. The materials used are of good quality and employ a carefully selected palette of construction materials, which complement the existing architecture of the city.

The central location of Milton Keynes Bus Station Skate Park is key – it creates a place where young people feel secure, rather than isolated in a remote corner of the park. The facility provides a challenging experience for young people and a place to meet friends.

The site blends so seamlessly with the location that people often say: "Is that it?" or "Where is it?" The facility does not detract from, but enhances the existing site.

For more information, contact:
Senior Landscape Architect, UDLA, Development and Design, Environment Directorate, PO Box 113, Milton Keynes Council, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes, MK9 3HN, tel 01908 252270, richard.ferrington@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

© Aileen Shackell

The site blends well with the surrounding streetscape.

© Aileen Shackell

Improvising with 'loose parts'.

© Aileen Shackell

Structures have been designed and specified to a high standard, and to stand up to high levels of usage.

Causewayhead Park
Stirling

Client:	**Stirling Council**
Location:	**Causewayhead Park, Stirling**
Designers:	**Judi Legg, Play Space Designer, and Mike Hyatt, Landscape Architect**
Project timescale:	**Planning started 2005. Opened August 2006. Planting in 2006/07**
Capital cost:	**Approximately £70,000**
Funding:	**Section 75 (Scottish equivalent of Section 106) housing developers' contributions; Scottish Natural Heritage; local Causewayhead Community Council donation**

Causewayhead Park is a popular park, situated at the foot of Stirling's Wallace Monument and used by the immediate neighbourhood and people from further afield. Its paddling pool and sand area is a big attraction, along with its wide range of play equipment and ball games area.

During summer 2005, a team of parents with children aged 2–11 (the Roving Reporters) used, observed and evaluated the park, engaging with other users. Their findings made an important contribution to the design brief. The following key decisions were made.

Fencing was removed from around the play area, paddling pool, sand area and most play equipment. Children are no longer corralled into a small area, but can expand into the whole landscape. Whilst internal fences were removed, the boundary alongside a busy main road was strengthened. The park is popular with dogwalkers, and there was concern about the proximity of dogs to water and sand. This was countered by signs and dog bins to encourage dog walkers to skirt the park, and by working with the Dog Warden to run a local information campaign with posters, flyers and free poop scoops.

The paddling pool was surrounded by decking, and given decked islands, making it more interesting. The sand area was extended, and a new water pump and cobbled rilled area runs into it, enabling children to mix sand and water.

Although set at the foot of a wooded hill, the park had almost no planting. A Scottish Natural Heritage grant enabled introduction of Scots pines, birches and beech hedging as well as amelanchier which adds interest to the sand and bark areas. Willows have been planted in the sand play area to help address (along with improved drainage) waterlogging problems caused by water running into the sand. Some areas of grass have been left to grow long, helping connect the park to its wider landscape.

Almost all equipment has been retained, but repainted to a consistent and subtler colour scheme. Raised timber edging around equipment has also been removed so boundaries are more blurred, and surfaces flow into each other.

For more information, contact:
Children's Services – Play Services, Stirling Council, Unit 12, Back O'Hill Industrial Estate, Back O'Hill Road, Stirling , FK8 1SH, tel 01786 430120, play@stirling.gov.uk
Sue Gutteridge, Play Consultancy, tel 0131 662 9984, suegutteridge@btinternet.com.

© Aileen Shackell

Planting rather than fencing helps to sub-divide the site internally.

© Stirling Council Play Services

No fencing round equipment means children use the whole park.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Sand and water together.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Interactive water play.

Climbing Forest
Coombe Abbey Country Park

Client:	**Coventry Council**
Location:	**Coventry**
Project timescale:	**January – July 2006**
Designer:	**Coventry City Council/TimberPlay**
Capital cost:	**£80,000**
Funding:	**Coventry Council Parks Service, capital works budget**

Development of the detailed design for this scheme was carried out in close co-operation with English Heritage and the local Conservation Officer, to ensure that the finished scheme was appropriate for this Listed landscape. Consultation with park users, including interviewing carried out by teenagers, identified that more adventurous provision was needed for older children.

The Climbing Forest consists of a number of tall oak posts set into the ground, supporting a complex network of ropes, nets, rails and ladders, each set at varying heights. At over 4 metres tall and with a diameter of approximately 300mm, each of these posts echoes the form and density of the surrounding tall trees. The untreated posts, with their natural finish, blend naturally with the surrounding oak forest, and though the bark has been removed, their tree-like form makes the posts recognisably only a few (manufactured) steps removed from the surrounding tree trunks.

Though at design stage the feature was aimed predominantly at children and young people aged between 8 and 15, the Climbing Forest now caters for all ages, including adults in their twenties. The Climbing Forest is consciously 'non-age-specific' in appearance. It attracts boys and girls equally.

The Forest is carefully designed to accommodate a very wide range of abilities, with the lowest and highest climbing elements as low as 0.5 metre and as high as 4 metres above ground level. Children exploring the equipment are encouraged to work within their capabilities and to stretch themselves – when they are ready.

The scheme has been very carefully designed to provide an exciting and challenging play experience for older children. The manufacturer carried out a full risk assessment of the equipment throughout the design stage. Hand-holds in timber, and knots in climbing ropes, are carefully located and dimensioned to permit access at the lowest levels for younger children but to prevent their access to higher levels where longer legs and a stronger grip are essential for their safety.

The number of claims against the council has fallen since this scheme was implemented, compared to those arising from use of the existing traditional style play area. Vandalism in the woodland areas has also fallen since the scheme's completion

For more information, contact:
Coombe Abbey Country Park, Brinklow Road, Binley, Nr Coventry CV3 2AB, tel 024 7645 3720 Coventry City Council, Coombe.countrypark@coventry.gov.uk, www.coventry.gov.uk
TimberPlay, Aizlewoods Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield S3 8GG, tel 0845 458 9118 www.timber-play.com.

There's room for lots of people to use the Climbing Forest at the same time.

Collaborative, social play, for girls as well as boys.

Challenging play for older children too.

Chapelfield Play Area
Cowie, near Stirling

Client:	**Stirling Council**
Location:	**Cowie near Stirling**
Designers:	**Judi Legg, Play Space Designer, and Mike Hyatt, Landscape Architect**
Project timescale:	**Planning started 2000. Opened 2006**
Capital cost:	**Approximately £110,000**
Funding:	**Section 75 (Scottish equivalent to Section 106) housig developers' contributions; BBC Children in Need; Stirling Landfill Tax Trust; Cowie Play Areas Group fundraising**

In 2000, a child drowned in a farmer's pond in Cowie, an ex-mining village near Stirling. This tragedy prompted residents to campaign and fundraise for a local play area.

A suitable site was identified – the site of a neolithic settlement that was of archaeological significance and therefore not available for housing. Although children already played there, the site was contentious because it was adjacent to the pond where the child had drowned. It took time to work through painful feelings about the drowning and to achieve design solutions that addressed safety issues, without compromising the children's need for independence and to experience challenge and risk.

Ideas from a visit by local children to a pre-history park and information about the site's history have been built into the park design including shelters, cooking and seating areas, and a raised beach, along with mounds, tunnels, slides and a climbing wall. The design contains elements which feel familiar to the children who were involved. Relatively few pieces of equipment are set in a succession of carefully inter-connected spaces. Quite dramatic changes in level have radically changed the previously flat site. Although the site is quite small, the feeling that 'there's always something round the corner' encourages visitors to explore. The routes through the site invite the use of bikes and wheeled toys. The natural elements include ditches which can hold rainwater for a short time.

The site was originally treeless. Local children were involved in planting rowan, birch, Kilmarnock willows and Japanese maples. These planting sessions included environmental games, explanations and discussions about the importance of trees to wildlife and to people, the reasons for including native species, and how the children could help to look after them. The hedge that reinforces and will eventually hide the fence between the play area and the farmer's pond includes blackthorn, hawthorn and dog rose. There are also attractive shrub areas of witch hazel, holly and honeysuckle.

Some initial problems with misuse/over enthusiastic use of the site in the evenings by teenagers were dealt with firmly and constructively by local residents who have taken responsibility for locking the park at night.

For more information, contact:
Children's Services – Play Services, Stirling Council, Unit 12, Back O'Hill Industrial Estate, Back O'Hill Road, Stirling , FK8 1SH, tel 01786 430120, play@stirling.gov.uk
Sue Gutteridge, Play Consultancy, tel 0131 662 9984, suegutteridge@btinternet.com.

General view from site entrance.

Semi-circular walls set into the mould are climbable on the inside face.

Plenty of room to ride a bike too.

Balance features alongside the footpath draw the visitor into the site.

Cowley Teenage Space
Lambeth

Client:	**Estate Management Board**
Location:	**Cowley Estate, Brixton Road, LB Lambeth**
Designer:	**Snug and Outdoor**
Project timescale:	**Project completed in 2003**
Capital cost:	**£100,000 for whole scheme (plus £12,000–£15,000 for consultation/and Snug and Outdoor's design work)**
Funding:	**Estate Management Board**

Snug and Outdoor were contracted in the summer of 2003 to consider improving provision for teenagers as part of a wider refurbishment project on the estate.

The aim of the project was to engage young people on the estate in an imaginative design process which ensured that their needs were at the heart of the new scheme to build an outdoor space for teenagers. The core of the consultation took place on the proposed site itself, which became a large-scale experimental area for two weeks. Objects such as large wooden cubes, ramps and platforms were utilised by the teenagers to shape the space for themselves and try out new ideas.

In addition, the Cowley Teenage Space website provided an interactive forum for the expression of opinions, and this also allowed the young people to post their own photos. With a multi-generational population, it was seen as crucial that everyone who had a view was able to express it.

The young people were keen to have their 'own' space, but wanted to ensure that the new layout would not be so exciting as to attract large numbers of visitors, even gangs, from off-site, and they wanted the space to be used flexibly and for different functions. And though ball games were to be provided for, the aim was that these should not dominate the space to the exclusion of other activities.

The new layout included a small combination 'low-key' ramp and mound; a 5-a-side football pitch and basketball area, and better entrances and planting around the boundary. Two different sitting places were also included, specially designed to accommodate the different ways in which boys and girls socialise – boys tend to sit in rows, and girls prefer to sit in a huddle.

The layout successfully accommodates both space for ball games and quieter social spaces for children and young people to sit and chat, as well as a feature for bikes, whereas most ball games areas have only the one function.

The Teenage Space has been redesigned to a high standard, and for the young people using the site this is appreciated – high quality design and materials tell the young people that they are valued. Complaints about teenage behaviour have dropped considerably, along with a decrease in vandalism and graffiti.

For more information, contact:
Snug & Outdoor, 127 Rathcoole Gardens, London N8 9PH, tel: 020 8374 2176
fax 0870 706 4654, enquiries@snugandoutdoor.co.uk, www.snugandoutdoor.co.uk.

Entrance to Teenage Space: high quality design and specification.

Seating alongside the ball games area.

Informal seating/shelter structure.

Ramp for wheeled play is also a place to meet.

Cutsyke Play Forest
Castleford

Client:	**The Castleford Project**
Location:	**Cutsyke, West Yorkshire**
Designers:	**Steve Warren, Estell Warren and Sutcliffe Play**
Project timescale:	**The project was completed in April 2005**
Capital cost:	**£220,000**
Funding:	**Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and supporting regeneration agencies**

Cutsyke, once a thriving West Yorkshire mining town, is now classed as an area of high deprivation where children's play facilities were, until recently, virtually non-existent.

The Cutsyke Play Forest – a 400-square-metre play forest with no designated ways in or out and no prescribed routes to follow – was the first community-led scheme to be completed as part of The Castleford Project, a major regeneration initiative involving Channel 4, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and supporting agencies.

The local community played a leading role throughout, from the initial design and planning stages to completion. Children were at the heart of the project, and selected the final design from a number of plans submitted as part of the Channel 4 project.

The process of design was unusual and of interest for a number of reasons. The design was the subject of a competition, where the brief was written between Wakefield MDC and the community. The children of Cutsyke then chose the winner, Architects Allen Todd Associates, who had subcontracted the design to Landscape Architects Estell Warren.

Sutcliffe Play was contracted to develop the concept play forest design, essentially consisting of 6-metre poles, platform, slides and netting into a scheme that could be built. This involved an elevated open platform 4 metres above the ground, which could have been interpreted as contravening the European Standard EN1176. This problem was overcome by a RoSPA risk assessment of the scheme, which decided that the benefits outweighed the risks.

The success of this project depended on the close working between all partners from an early stage in the process.

The project has been successful in transforming former derelict council allotments into a showcase play scheme that has attracted interest from all over the world. Although designed for older children, with an adult scale to it, younger children are also attracted to the play forest, underlining its appeal to the community as a whole.

Cutsyke Community Group, with members aged 7 to 74, has taken complete ownership of the forest. The group has been presented with the Duke of York Community Initiative award in recognition of 'outstanding work to support and develop its local community'.

For more information, contact:
Sutcliffe Play, Sutcliffe Play Limited, Waggon Lane, Upton, Pontefract WF9 1JS
tel 01977 653200, www.sutcliffeplay.co.uk.

Cutsyke Play Forest and log seats.

Even young children can reach right up to the top.

Graduated risk and challenge for all ages.

Darnley Park
Stirling

Client:	**Stirling Council**
Location:	**Stirling**
Designers:	**Judi Legg, Play Space Designer, and Page and Park Architects, Glasgow**
Project timescale:	**Planning started 2001. Opened 2004**
Capital cost:	**£280,000, including paths, steps, lights, infrastructure, etc.**
Funding:	**Stirling Council housing, environment and children's services; Stirling Local Community Development Fund**

Darnley Park was created on a formerly neglected city centre site. With dramatic views over Stirling to the River Forth and the Ochil Hills, it forms a serene and interesting space for people living in the immediate area of high density housing, for the many visitors to Stirling's historic Old Town, and for those using it as a through route between the upper and lower parts of the town

In developing this site, the main aim was to create a space that encouraged imaginative and child directed play, in a landscape that held local significance and meaning. The distinct but connected play spaces contain grit and sand providing safe surfaces and good play material at the same time. All actual play structures and equipment (for climbing, sliding, balancing, swinging, ball games and much else besides) have been built or chosen specifically for the site, to integrate with, complement and enhance the landscape. The site includes an unconventionally shaped ball court cut into the woodland on one side of the site.

Natural wooded areas on the embankment bordering the long flight of steps connecting the site to the town centre below and surrounding the ball court have been left wild but not neglected, and are managed in such a way as to encourage children to explore and use these areas.

Local residents, who had first raised the need for the park were involved throughout, participating in all project meetings during the construction period and visiting the site regularly. Local children worked with playworkers, a sculptor and an artist/blacksmith to design, make and site special boulder features.

Since the site opened it has been the focus for numerous events. Stirling Council Play Services work with local children on a regular basis, and children themselves have been involved in the organisation and hosting of community events in the park, including working with playworkers and a pyrotechnician to design their own fireworks display. They have most recently been involved in planning and executing a new phase of planting on the site – the edible area – including rasperries, currants and pear, plum and apple trees.

The park has won wide acclaim, being the sole Scottish winner of an International Architecture for Children Award in 2004.

For more information, contact:
Children's Services – Play Services, Stirling Council, Unit 12, Back O'Hill Industrial Estate, Back O'Hill Road, Stirling , FK8 1SH, tel 01786 430120, play@stirling.gov.uk
Sue Gutteridge, Play Consultancy, tel 0131 662 9984, suegutteridge@btinternet.com.

© Stirling Council Play Services

The play space has a panoramic view over Stirling.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Artist-made play sculpture.

© Aileen Shackell

The play space is on the doorstep of a large housing estate.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Children bring their own toys to use in the sandy areas.

Diana, Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Client:	**Royal Parks Agency**
Location:	**Kensington Gardens**
Designer:	**Land Use Consultants**
Project timescale:	**Inception early 1999; project completion 2000**
Capital cost:	**£1.2 million**
Funding:	**The facility was funded by the DCMA/Royal Parks Agency**

Soon after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, it was decided to commemorate her life by creating a high quality children's play space in Kensington Gardens by upgrading an existing facility on a site at the north side of the Gardens.

The scheme's layout was based on the story of *Peter Pan* (author JM Barrie had lived overlooking Kensington Gardens and often spent time there), and a number of elements from this classic children's novel appeared in the scheme: a pirate ship and treasure chest; teepees; and a ticking crocodile, lurking half-buried in the sand.

The main objectives of the scheme were to create a play space which would be as inclusive as possible, so that all children would feel welcome and ready to explore, whether disabled or non-disabled. It would provide a wide range of play opportunities, and a variety of different spaces – busy and quiet; peaceful and noisy. It would allow children to experience and enjoy natural elements – especially working with sand and water – and facilitate creative play, with children choosing how and where they wanted to play without the need to be dependent on adult assistance.

The site has been hugely successful, with around 3,000 children a week enjoying this play space. High levels of usage have meant that there have been some concerns with water quality. These have been dealt with by converting the recycling/filtration system with a non-recycling system using water from a borehole in the Gardens, with the water running into soakaways (via the sandy areas which provide so much play value).

Equipment provided for access by wheelchair users has been designed carefully so that it also appeals to those on foot. Firm, smooth wheelchair-accessible paths connect the main sandy spaces where wheelchair users can, with assistance, play in the sand along with non-disabled children. Impact absorbent sandy surfacing doubles successfully as a play feature in its own right.

Play-related desire lines have appeared through planting in numerous places, and these could now be accommodated by revising the layout locally, as appropriate.

For more information, contact:
Land Use Consultants, tel 020 7383 5784, www.landuse.co.uk.

Through the main activity on the site focuses on the pirate ship there are plenty of quieter spaces too.

Sand is used extensively as an impact absorbent surface with lots of 'creative' play value.

A drinking fountain like this can be a simple way of incorporating water into a site.

Artist's aerial perspective view of playground.

Dilkes Park
Thurrock

Client:	**Thurrock Council**
Location:	**South Ockendon, Essex**
Designers:	**Thurrock Council's Cleaning and Greening department (Andy Furze, Head of department 1990–2002, with Peter Scott and Peter Golding); since 2002 Carol Spencer, project officer**
Project timescale:	**Regular changes since 1990**
Capital cost:	**£109,000 between 1998 and 2008 (ball court, shelters, sand volleyball court, play equipment)**
Funding:	**Since 1998 all capital funding has come from Veolia ES Cleanaway Mardyke Trust (Landfill Communities Fund)**

Dilkes Park, was chosen in the mid 1990s by the Cleaning and Greening Department at Thurrock Council as the best location for new teenage provision. A combination of all-weather surfaced ball courts, floodlighting, and new youth shelters encouraged young people to move their activities out of the town centre and into the park.

One early teenage shelter in the park was not, by itself, enough to draw teenagers away from the centre. New shelters around the ball court were designed in close consultation with the young people, to allow both inside and outside use, and to include multiple exits (to discourage bullying). Two structures were included to accommodate more than one group of teenagers at a time.

The introduction of ball games areas and shelters was carried out alongside gradual refurbishment of the existing, nearby play area. This facility was a small, fenced play area, surfaced in rubber tiles. The council removed the boundary fencing, replaced some of the rubber surfacing with bark chips and, over time, extended the play area by adding other items of equipment. This is an ongoing process. Wherever possible, old equipment is left in place so new items add to the play opportunites on the site.

New equipment has been located at a low density in between existing mature trees. The lack of boundary fencing combined with careful locating of the equipment means that the play space has a natural, informal quality that is very appealing. Without any defined boundary, the play area blurs into the surrounding parkland. The massing of the trees means that not all of the equipment is visible together, which positively invites exploration. Footpaths through the park wind through the play space, informally, and the presence of passers-by makes the space feel safer.

Locating equipment informally within a natural environment has given the facility a strong sense of place. The approach to refurbishment does not depend on large capital outlay but can be implemented in an incremental manner as funding becomes available. Rubber, sand and bark have all been used as safety surfaces, giving a more varied feel.

For more information, contact:
Veolia ES Cleanaway Mardyke Trust, Parish Farm, South End, Much Hadham
Herts SG10 6EP, tel 01279 84 3675, andyfurze@aol.com.
Thurrock Council, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex RM17 6SL
tel 01375 652350, cspencer@thurock.gov.uk.

© Aileen Shackell

Equipment is located informally between trees.

© Aileen Shackell

Without fencing the whole woodland becomes part of the play space.

© Andy Furze

This bench was installed in consultation with a local special school.

Horsham Park
Horsham

Client:	**Horsham District Council**
Location:	**Central Horsham**
Designer:	**Landscape Architect Arlene McIntosh**
Project timescale:	**Project completed in 2003**
Capital cost:	**£230,000 for whole scheme (including £130,000 for relocating existing play equipment and purchase of new play equipment)**
Funding:	**From a parks capital budget**

Horsham Park's new play space is seen as a great improvement on the previous facility, which was a traditional play area, largely surfaced in rubber wet-pour. The construction of the new Leisure Centre on the site of the old play space made replacement essential.

The aim was to provide a breadth of play opportunities for all children aged from birth to 14 years. A deliberate decision was made to move towards creating a play 'experience' rather than a play 'area'. The site is characterised by gently rising topography, with good views over the park, as well as a small number of mature trees. The new layout is designed to take advantage of both these aspects. Some equipment was retained and relocated. New equipment was placed within the remodelled hillside, which was carefully designed to enhance the existing tree planting. A 'valley' running down between these trees became a dry 'river' filled with sand and crossed by a bridge, designed by a local wood sculptor.

'Zoning' the equipment geographically, means there is no need for internal fencing to separate different age groups. Planting and ground modelling help create the feeling of different spaces and places to go to. Young people over 14 are also welcome.

The site is located close to a café and toilets and the new Leisure Centre and swimming pool. People now visit from as far away as south London, and use other park attractions such as the children's maze, a sensory garden, and children's entertainments.

Staff are delighted with high levels of usage and continuing positive feedback from users. 'Effort put in at planning and design stage and also in consultation has allowed us to look at the project in a holistic sense – this has allowed us to achieve so much more, for not much extra cost.'

The involvement of local artists, especially a wood carver, has introduced some unusual and tactile structures (seating and a bridge). These have not been any more expensive than off-the-peg items but are unique to this site.

The large sandy surfaces are enormously popular with the children, and have proved to be simple and inexpensive to maintain. The dry garden area and interpretation boards have provided an additional educational element to the play experience.

For more information, contact:
Parks Community Liaison Officer, Horsham District Council, Park House, North Street, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1RL, tel 01403 215201, www.horsham.gov.uk.

The bridge by a local woodcarver forms part of the entrance into the site.

Planting makes the setting for equipment both attractive and playable.

The totem pole sits surrounded by a lush planting scheme specially designed to need little watering.

The play space includes different types of surfacing, to increase the variety of play experiences there.

Invermead Close Playable Space
Hammersmith and Fulham

Client:	**Dominion Housing Association**
Location:	**Queen Charlotte's Estate**
Designer:	**Paul Shaw, PLAYLINK**
Project timescale:	**Project completed January 2008**
Capital cost:	**£20,000**
Funding:	**From capital budget**

This high density housing development is relatively new, having been opened some three years ago. Children and young people had been using a fenced area adjacent to a housing block. The area was located within only a few metres of residents' sitting room windows and noise from the ball games and from the large numbers using it were proving to be a great source of irritation to residents.

A lengthy process of engagement and involvement followed. Workshops were held on the site, which included discussions with all the local residents – adults without children, families, and the children and young people who used the space mainly for ball games.

A design was developed by a landscape architect for a shared communal space on the grassy verge adjacent to the housing block. The design created a playable space – a space which invited play, though one not designated solely for play. The new layout included a fallen tree, shrub planting to provide a protective buffer to the residents' windows, and a small 'play mound', as well as some boulders, a new pathway, and two separate timber seating areas that double as stepping stones or climbing structures.

The new layout for this area has already encouraged adults and children to meet and talk to each other, even though the space was opened to the residents in January 2008, the coldest time of year when people's use of the outdoors is minimal.

Time spent on developing design proposals was time well spent, to make sure that 'the right answer is found for the right problem'. A creative approach was needed to make the most of such a small space so close to housing.

Though the design fee added to the cost, in this situation using a designer's skill meant that a satisfactory design solution was found, even on a very low budget.

For more information, contact:
Dominion Housing Group, 15th Floor Capital House, 25 Chapel Street,
London NW1 5WX, tel 020 8840 6262, fax: 020 8799 2220, info@dominionhg.co.uk
www.dominionhg.co.uk.
PLAYLINK, phil@playlink.org.uk, www.playlink.org.uk.

© Phil Doyle

Children undertake their own 'risk assessment' when they play.

© Phil Doyle

Detailed view of timber seat and boulders.

© Paul Shaw Design

Sketch proposal for scheme.

© Phil Doyle

This small playable space has been located very close to housing.

Langdon Park
Tower Hamlets

Client:	**LB Tower Hamlets**
Location:	**Poplar, next to the new Langdon Park Docklands Light Railway (DLR) Station**
Designer:	**LB Tower Hamlets Landscape Design team**
Project timescale:	**Project completed spring 2007**
Capital cost:	**£70,000 for whole scheme (including fees)**
Funding:	**From DLR capital budget**

Langdon Park was originally laid out as an open expanse of grass in the heart of one of east London's most deprived areas of social housing. Until 2006, the park's play area was located behind 100 metres of metal fencing, which separated it from the rest of the park. The play equipment inside the fenced play area was laid out in an ad hoc fashion, and was dominated by rubber safety surfacing, and tarmac footpaths.

As part of a scheme to develop a new DLR station adjacent to the park, the decision was taken to decommission the existing play area and replace it with a facility which was much more sensitively integrated within the wider park.

Some of the existing play equipment was relocated within the new space to provide a number of play activities along the new footpath crossing the park, and leading to the new DLR station. Now that the old multi-play unit is surrounded by new playable mounds, it has a 'sense of place' and is more enjoyable for children to use as a result.

The new scheme has added visual interest to the park and, being unfenced, has a very flexible layout which could easily be extended and augmented if and when funding allows.

The scheme shows that using tree and shrub planting, mounding and boulders gives the equipment a new setting and helps extend the range of play opportunities. Removing fencing also seemed to make people realise that the whole park is for children to play in and not just the play space.

The tree planting on this scheme was heavily vandalised soon after the scheme opened. With hindsight it might have been better to do the tree planting as a second (later) phase, once the novelty value of the scheme had worn off. It might also have been helpful to have included local young people in helping with the planting (the original timescale had not allowed for this). The good news is that new trees were planted in March 2008.

For more information, contact:
Head of Parks and Open Spaces, Communities, Localities and Culture, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Mulberry Place, PO Box 55739, 5 Clove Crescent, London E14 1BY,
tel 020 7364 5000 generalenquiries@towerhamlets.gov.uk.
Phil Doyle, tel 07734 837323.

© Kate Shackell

Some equipment was relocated and surrounded by new mounding and boulders.

© Nicola Butler

© Kate Shackell

© Nicola Butler

Other equipment was relocated alongside the main footpath.

Mast House Terrace
Tower Hamlets

Client:	**LB Tower Hamlets**
Location:	**Park adjacent to residential housing area on the Isle of Dogs**
Designer:	**The Landscape Partnership/Fearless Ramps (wheel park)**
Project timescale:	**Project completed August 2006**
Capital cost:	**£470,000 for whole scheme (including fees) which included £70,000 for wheel park**
Funding:	**Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF)**

This site had originally been laid out as a park, including a play space. The site had, for many years, been subject to extensive vandalism and antisocial behaviour. Though very close to housing, views into the park from outside were very limited and over the years it had effectively become a no-go area.

It was felt that only a major redesign could rescue this troubled site from the misuse and abuse from which it suffered; a major scheme was therefore developed for a completely new urban park. The focus of the scheme was on providing a place that young people would feel was somewhere they could meet and socialise with friends. It was also seen by the designers as crucial that the space was designed to a high quality in order to help the young people who use it feel valued.

The scheme included a new wheel park, ball games area and climbing stones. The scheme also included new and improved pedestrian routes through the park, which have helped integrate the space better within the surrounding streetscape and also create through traffic which helped make the space feel busy and safe to use.

As part of the focus on integrating the site within its surroundings, new views into the site were created from the road. The wheeled play area for skaters and BMX bikers now makes a very positive addition to the street scene, and passing pedestrians and bus passengers particularly enjoy watching the young people showing off their skills.

The high quality of the design has encouraged young people from different ethnic minority groups to share the space together in a way that was never possible in the past, reducing the sense of 'territorial' ownership.

The new wheel park has been located immediately next to housing, not in accordance with the existing National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) (now Fields in Trust) guidance, which recommends a buffer of 30 metres between skate parks and housing. However, in this situation, not only would it not have been achievable but it would have detracted from the principles of the scheme – to integrate it within the street scene. Though tensions arise from time to time, generally having it so close to housing has worked.

For more information, contact:
The Landscape Partnership, London Office, Tunnel Wharf, 121 Rotherhithe Street, London SE16 4NF, tel 020 7252 0002, fax 020 7237 1003, tlp@london.tlp.uk.com www.thelandscapepartnership.com.

© Phil Doyle

A place to meet as well as skate.

© Phil Doyle

Good wheel parks like this one are very popular, but tend to attract boys rather than girls.

© Phil Doyle

The youth space is located close to housing.

© Kate Shackell

Graffitti art alongside tagging is part of the ethos of the site.

Priory Park Play Area and Skate Park
Reigate

Client:	**Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBC)**
Location:	**Priory Park, Reigate, Surrey**
Designers:	**Land Use Consultants (LUC) (play area); The Fountain Workshop in association with LUC (water play); Bendcrete (skate park)**
Project timescale:	**Opened autumn/winter 2007 (water play opening spring 2008)**
Capital cost:	**Play area approximately £400,000; skate park approximately £206,000**
Funding:	**Heritage Lottery Fund, with matched funding from RBBC**

Being set in a large and popular park, it was always intended that this scheme would serve as a 'destination' play area. The wider scheme also included a new pavilion with café and toilets. As a result people now travel some way to get to the new scheme.

The play area includes a large quantity of equipment but all carefully set within mounded, vegetated areas. Great emphasis has been placed on integrating the space within the wider park landscape, and though the play space is bordered by an evergreen hedge, the designers have tried to maintain visual continuity with the park landscape by keeping the play area's path surfaces in similar finishes to those elsewhere in the park, and including tree planting within the play space which is similar to that in the surrounding park.

The skate park was constructed in concrete, and is located partly above, partly below ground, to minimise noise intrusion. It has been designed mainly for skateboarders but it is expected that BMX bikes will also use this space. It has been located in its 'own' space, and the boundaries have been kept open, so maintaining good visibility of skaters from the wider park.

The experience of Reigate is that sand makes an excellent impact-absorbent surface. It is relatively low cost to install, low cost to maintain, and has considerable play value in its own right.

Water play is relatively expensive to design, construct and maintain. However, the feature here is quite low-tech compared to many (for what is essentially a 'destination' play space) which means that overall the costs are lower and it is more likely to be in use for more of the year.

For more information, contact:
Land Use Consultants, tel 020 7383 5784, www.landuse.co.uk.

Grass mats were used extensively around equipment, to ensure that the play space blended with the parkland setting.

Sand was also used, for impact absorbency and for extra play value.

Tyre swings are popular with children of all ages.

Provost's Park
Gargunnock, Stirlingshire

Client:	**Stirling Council**
Location:	**Gargunnock near Stirling**
Designers:	**Judi Legg, Play Space Designer, and Mike Hyatt, Landscape Architect**
Project timescale:	**Planning started in 2004. Project largely completed by May 2006**
Capital cost:	**£54,000**
Funding:	**Housing developer's contribution (£24,000); grants and fundraising by Gargunnock Playgroup (£30,000)**

This project was to redesign an existing long-established play area which consisted of pieces of mostly old play equipment dotted randomly around all four sides of a football pitch. As moving or reducing the size of the pitch was not an option, this project presented considerable design challenges. In its favour, the site was well located in the centre of the village, with numerous access points from surrounding streets. While mostly flat and treeless, one side of the site included gently sloping mature woodland.

Local workshops and surveys contributed to development of a design and local community representatives participated in project and site meetings. The main aims were to improve the range and quality of play opportunities for all ages, to create a pleasant and inviting space for adults and create a coherent space.

The re-designed play space wraps itself around one end (including the woodland) and partly down two of the sides of the pitch. Areas of mounding separate the play spaces from the pitch, providing changes of level and a sense of enclosure, and strimmed grass, bark and stepping stone paths join the spaces and invite exploration and journeys through the space. Existing equipment that still had life in it was refurbished, repainted and relocated to form part of the new play landscape. New features include a large sand play area contained by dune-like mounds, an aerial runway that travels through the trees, a trampoline set into the ground, and a series of four-metre-high climbing poles.

Planting has been used to define, integrate and add interest to this site. It includes a native species wildlife garden enclosed by willow that forms a restful part of the route through the space, Scots pines, wild cherry and resilient shrub planting of dogwood, virbinium, photinia and amelanchier. New areas of beech hedge were planted to fill in gaps in the existing site boundary.

Local children and teenagers worked with playworkers, the play space designer and an artists/craftsperson to design and make a range of features connected to the wildlife garden and the park as a whole.

For more information, contact:
Children's Services – Play Services, Stirling Council, Unit 12, Back O'Hill Industrial Estate, Back O'Hill Road, Stirling , FK8 1SH, tel 01786 430120, play@stirling.gov.uk.
Sue Gutteridge, Play Consultancy, tel 0131 662 9984, suegutteridge@btinternet.com.

Small individual play spaces were successfully fitted around the perimeter of the sports pitch.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Flying through the air.

© Stirling Council Play Services

A small wildlife garden complemented other spaces focused on equipment.

© Aileen Shackell

Picnic tables and planting make another place to go.

© Aileen Shackell

Spa Fields Play Space
Islington

Client:	**LB Islington**
Location:	**Adjacent to Spa Fields Park, Clerkenwell**
Designer:	**Parklife**
Project timescale:	**Project completed in July 2007**
Capital cost:	**Contract value of £175,000 for play area only**
Funding:	**EC1 New Deal for Communities and Islington Council**

The designers were appointed by Islington Borough Council in 2006 to prepare a Framework Plan for the regeneration of this important but neglected park in the heart of Clerkenwell.

'Participative design' lay at the heart of the process, and children and young people were involved in all phases of the rejuvenation of the park including the new play area. The involvement of teenagers was particularly important as this group had been the focus for many of the 'problems' on the site. The involvement of adults in the consultation process was very carefully managed – adults were consulted separately to prevent their views from dominating. The Spa Fields scheme was developed in such a way as to bring the whole community together, including the 'hard to reach' groups such as older teenagers.

The play area is next to a busy through route, and feels a very safe place. The layout itself is intricate, and the site includes a complex arrangement of mounds, ditches, hollows and paths, all edged by planting and walls at sitting height, to help enclose the site and screen passing traffic.

Consultation with nine local schools involved the children drawing their ideas for a playground – and one particular drawing formed the main inspiration for the ultimate proposal, with mounding, circuitous paths, talking trees, and a 'Hobbit's House' all being expressed in some way in the final detailing. The designer saw engagement of children in the design as critical – this drove the design process throughout.

The project is successful in allowing the inclusion of bespoke play equipment designed specially for this site, which achieved safety certification. This proved a more affordable option than the standard off-the-peg equipment, though some of these savings were offset against additional design time. The equipment is designed to be non-prescriptive to allow flexibility of use and to give children's imagination free rein.

The scheme has restored a sense of safety to this site – which had latterly become a no go area. There has been no vandalism or anti-social behaviour on the site since completion.

For more information, contact:
Parklife, 27 Holywell Row, London EC2A 4JB, tel 020 7247 5800 fax 020 7247 5809, phil@parklifelondon.com, www.parklifelondon.com.

© Parklife

The completed scheme.

© Parklife

Above view, prior to implementation of the play area.

© Parklife

This equipment was specially designed for the site.

© Aileen Shackell

Equipment suitable for a wide range of ages.

Spacemakers
Bristol

Client:	**Local young people**
Location:	**Hartcliffe, Bristol**
Designers:	**Landscape Architect: Greg White of Loci Design; Artists: Kathrin Böhm, Cleo Broda, Calum Stirling**
Capital cost:	**Approximately £200,000, of which £150,000 was allocated to capital costs**
Funding:	**Bristol City Council; Hartcliffe Community Campus; ERDF Urban 2; The Home Office; Living Spaces (ODPM)**

Spacemakers was a two-year project in which young people, aged between 13 and 15, designed a public space within their own community in the Hartcliffe and Withywood area of Bristol. The young people were the clients for the scheme and made key creative decisions throughout its progress.

Prior to the development of the scheme, the site consisted of a neglected grassy field. The site did, however, have three positive features which were built into the new scheme. The naturally sloping topography was emphasised by placing the new youth shelter on top of the highest point of the site, and a contour slide – the only piece of play equipment in the scheme – was set into the side of the slope. The stream which ran below the site in an underground culvert was brought back to the surface to form a new, gently curving channel which winds through the site before disappearing back underground.

The site also benefited from the presence of a small number of very fine mature oak trees and, along with the new channel, these formed the focus for the level paved seating area in the lower part of the site.

A custom-designed stainless steel shelter is a main feature at Spacemakers. This provides a meeting place and somewhere to shelter in bad weather. It is clearly a well-designed structure, constructed in high quality materials, and the young people who use the site appreciate the message this sends out, that the site and its users are valued.

The safety of the participants was described by the Project Manager as being 'the biggest issue', and it was essential to gain the trust of parents from the outset. Involvement in the lengthy design and construction process led to significant personal development on the part of the young people on the team, and their involvement in the scheme has been key to the site's long-term sustainability.

Lessons learned include finding that headwall structures with flimsy gratings tend to be quickly removed by curious children and need to be made very sturdy.

For more information, contact:
The Architecture Centre, Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1 4QA, tel 0117 922 1540, info@architecturecentre.co.uk, www.architecture.co.uk.

© Nicola Butler

The specially designed youth shelter located on the highest point of the site forms an impressive focal point.

© Aileen Shackell

The lower parts of the site are laid out as an informal park, for the whole community to use.

© Aileen Shackell

© Aileen Shackell

The view from the top of the slide just below the shelter, across the whole site.

© Aileen Shackell

Wide steps make informal seating and overlook the level paved area below.

Telegraph Hill Park Youth Space
Lewisham

Client:	**LB Lewisham**
Location:	**Telegraph Hill, Lewisham, south east London**
Designer:	**Land Use Consultants**
Project timescale:	**2002–04 (part of a larger scheme)**
Capital cost:	**Approximately £100,000**
Funding:	**Heritage Lottery Fund, with match funding from LB Lewisham**

A key objective for this scheme was to improve the way in which play facilities were provided within the park so as to enhance the historic landscape.

Restoration of the missing historic ponds meant that the older children's play area had to be relocated elsewhere in the park. It was agreed that locating it on the side of the hill would allow the natural changes in level to be used to full effect. The omission of fencing from the scheme proved the key to sensitive integration of the layout within the park landscape, a key requirement of the Park User Group. Rubber impact absorbent surfaces were avoided and instead grass mat surfacing was used around the equipment, which further enabled the play area to blend seamlessly with surrounding grass.

The detailing of the sides of the contour slide proved the biggest design challenge. Advice received from the playground inspectors during the development of the design stated that access to the sides of the slide should be prevented, to avoid possible 'conflict' between children sliding down with others scrambling up on foot. Though lots of ideas to design in this access were developed, none were followed through as all were deemed too 'risky' by inspectors. The rubber wet-pour surfacing to the sides was the resulting compromise.

The advice received from the playground inspection process in relation to the treatment of the contour slide sides proved unnecessarily restrictive and resulted in detailing which reduces play value. A more considered approach to risk assessment by the designer would probably have resulted in a more play-friendly outcome.

Grass mat surfacing has proved less successful on high-wear points around equipment, with localised settlement below the tiles being an ongoing issue. In these areas the use of a loose-fill surface such as sand or grit might have been more practical.

For more information, contact:
Land Use Consultants, tel 020 7383 5784, www.landuse.co.uk.

Equipment is located to make best use of the naturally sloping site.

Unfenced equipment is more likely to be used by children and young people of all ages.

Trefusis Playing Field
Redruth

Client:	**Kerrier District Council**
Location:	**Redruth, Cornwall**
Designers:	**Kerrier District Council in-house landscape architects, working in association with Greg White of Loci Design; Simon Fraser of Play On; David Jarvis Associates Ltd; and Redruth Community School**
Project timescale:	**2006–07**
Capital cost:	**£212,000**
Funding:	**Liveability Fund – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister**

Trefusis Playing Field is located on the outskirts of Redruth, a historic tin-mining town currently undergoing significant regeneration. The playing fields were very under-used and most of the space consisted of close mown grass with old and dilapidated play equipment. The site has dramatic long views towards Carn Brea, a hillfort of important cultural significance with a former tin mine, castle, and older prehistoric remains.

Design Action: Devon and Cornwall was a 2-year Pilot Programme run locally by CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment), to promote involvement of young people in the design and regeneration of open space. Council officers decided to involve local young people in designing improvements for the playing fields, to make them a useful space for teenagers who had little provision in the neighbouring park.

Working with local young people from Redruth Community School, the design team undertook a design process, encompassing an 'inspiration field trip' to Spacemakers in Bristol; half day visits to local sites, and 'hands-on' design workshops. Initial design concepts were sketched and modelled in 3D, before being presented to all the members of the group. The design workshop kick started ideas for a new play area. Over several weeks a series of creative workshops with young people and close consultation with David Jarvis Associates fed into the design development to integrate the young peoples ideas, which were based on waves, surfing and spirals.

The final scheme includes a number of pieces of conventional fixed play equipment located in an attractive and well-designed setting which makes the most of the superb views, and benefits from the informal oversight provided by the adjacent housing.

As well as the play equipment a number of structures were chosen for their ability to be used flexibly – a curved sculptural skate wall doubles as a seating area; an artist designed 'loop' of metal can be played on or sat under; a steel beam could be another lower seat, or a balance feature. A distinctive Cornish hedge forms the boundary. A stone wall curves around the play area, with protruding steps allowing children to climb up and down easily and arrive in the play space by a more playful route.

For more information, contact:
Senior Landscape Architect, Kerrier District Council, Council Offices, Dolcoath Avenue, Camborne, Cornwall TR14 8SX, tel 01209 614466, jon.mitchell@kerrier.gov.uk
www.kerrier.gov.uk.

© Aileen Shackell

At Trefusis Park, the play equipment and its landscape setting were designed together from the start.

© Aileen Shackell

Projecting 'cilmbable' steps in the dry-stone wall.

© Kerrier District Council

A good example of equipment being enjoyed by a younger child than would normally use it.

© Aileen Shackell

Structures are included which promote flexible use of the play space, such as this concrete seat/skate surface.

© Kerrier District Council

The wall forms quite a steep drop around the play space but this forms part of the play experience.

Waverley Park
Stirling

Client:	**Stirling Council**
Location:	**Stirling**
Designer:	**Judi Legg, Play Space Designer, and Mike Hyatt, Landscape Architect**
Project timescale:	**Planning started 2003. Completed 2005**
Capital cost:	**£50,000**
Funding:	**Housing developers' contributions relating to three different developments**

Waverley Park consists of a football pitch and play area. It is long established and, as the only play area for this expanding neighbourhood, is an important neighbourhood facility that is well used by a wide range of children, young people and carers. It is also used regularly by the nearby primary school, nursery, playgroup and out of school care project. The site boundary is fenced as it is completely surrounded by roads.

An earlier re-design of the site in 1993 had, importantly, re-sited the football pitch to one side of the site, rather than in the centre, and reduced it to a seven-a-side size. At this stage much of the existing old play equipment was removed, and what remained was relocated, with new equipment and a sand play area on the rest of the site.

Among the aims of the most recent re-design were to introduce changes of level and planting to this completely flat and treeless space. The detailed brief for the design was put together slowly and was drawn from a number of sources. These included the Play Space Designer's long-term observation and use of the park as a local resident; discussion and observation sessions with relevant local groups; discussion with park users in the context of staffed 'play in the park' sessions.

The design sought to incorporate the priorities identified by users: to extend the sand play, to introduce more challenging climbing opportunities, and to introduce shade and wind breaks. Mounds, ditches, logs, boulders, bridges, reeds, trees and areas of long grass were introduced incorporating all of the existing equipment to create an interesting and challenging play landscape. Very little new equipment was bought, but all of the existing equipment was refurbished and repainted. During the very rainy construction period, the mud was greatly enjoyed with sponsored mud fights taking place as part of Comic Relief. This resulted in requests to keep a mud area – which has been done (rainfall allowing).

The planting, in which local children were involved, is very important in giving seasonal interest, and includes hazel, rowan, birch, amelanchier and willows as well as an embryonic rhododendron den. In 2007, a tree that was being felled at a nearby construction site was brought to Waverley Park, adding a new focus of interest.

For more information, contact:
Children's Services – Play Services, Stirling Council, Unit 12, Back O'Hill Industrial Estate, Back O'Hill Road, Stirling , FK8 1SH, tel 01786 430120, play@stirling.gov.uk
Sue Gutteridge, Play Consultancy, tel 0131 662 9984, suegutteridge@btinternet.com.

© Stirling Council Play Services

New mounds transformed this previously level site and made the equipment even more exciting.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Mounding helps sub-divide the site and create individual places for the different items of equipment.

© Aileen Shackell

Sand and grit surfacing at Waverley Park offer different play experiences.

© Stirling Council Play Services

Maintaining grass at different lengths creates more play opportunities.

Wyvis Street Play Space
Tower Hamlets

Client:	**LB Tower Hamlets**
Location:	**Poplar, East London**
Designer:	**Aileen Shackell/Marc Armitage**
Project timescale:	**August 2006–June 2007**
Capital cost:	**£50,000**
Funding:	**Thames Gateway London Partnership**

As the nearby park included a traditional approach to play, it was decided to pilot a different approach on this site, focusing on the landscape setting, emphasising natural features rather than on fixed equipment. In addition, it was felt that the small scale of the space and its close proximity to housing meant that the site leant itself better to small scale, more modest provision, which would not attract such large numbers of users.

In the summer of 2006, a play consultant spent some time watching how young people used the site, and by the end of the summer a concept plan, in the form of a 'zoning' diagram, had been drawn up, based on the research findings. The scheme included very little equipment and, most controversially, an open sandpit.

The proposed improvements aimed to introduce a sense of place into what was rather a bland, characterless space. Low mounding around the open edges of the site helped screen traffic and provide a feeling of enclosure. Existing paths were retained, and these allowed the site to be divided into two distinct areas, one for older children, with a tyre swing, and one for younger children, with a sandpit. Gentle depressions in the ground emphasised the different spaces.

The site remains, as before, unfenced, with only the mounding separating the space from the surrounding roads. Dogwalkers are encouraged to use the dog refuse bins which have been relocated away from the play space. The most contentious element was the inclusion of a sandpit. Though local parents doubted that it would survive vandalism, or that the council would be able to maintain it, the sandpit has remained in use since the summer of 2007 and is extremely popular with all ages, including the teenagers who are drawn to the seating area next to it.

The absence of fencing around and within the site has allowed it to be used very flexibly; though designed in two 'age zones', the entire site is used in practice by children and young people of all ages.

The scheme is one of very few in the borough to include an open sandpit. The anticipated problems with dog fouling have not materialised, partly due to extra targeted support from the dog warden (and a few highly publicised fines for fouling).

For more information, contact:
Aileen Shackell Associates, aileen@asa-landscape.com, www.asa-landscape.com.

© Aileen Shackell

The new tyre swing is situated in a hollow in the ground, surrounded by mounding to screen traffic and for biking over.

© Aileen Shackell

Playing with sand, close to home.

© Nicola Butler

Checking that the daffodils have all come up.

© Nicola Butler

Comfortable seating makes the visit more enjoyable for parents too.

Stirling Council
Organisational case study

A new approach

Stirling Council has successfully constructed a number of play areas which exemplify the design principles set out in this document. The council's success in delivering good quality play spaces is due to: an integrated team approach; a dedicated Playgrounds Team, directly responsible for play area maintenance; a commitment to professional design; and the design process.

Service structure, organisation and principles

Play Services, headed by a service manager, is based in Children's Services and is responsible for staffed play and crèche provision and direct management, development and maintenance of all of the council's 90 plus play areas (including several skateparks and informal sports areas). Two teams, each headed by a team leader – the Play Programmes Team, and the Playgrounds Team – are responsible for the two elements of the service. They work closely together, following a shared set of values and principles focusing on children and the importance of play.

The Playgrounds Team consists of the team leader, a playgrounds inspector/supervisor, three permanent playgrounds operatives, and two seasonal staff. The team is responsible for all aspects (except litter collection) of the care and maintenance of play areas – including planting, mowing regimes, etc, along with installation, checking and maintenance of play equipment and surfacing. Each team member is multi-skilled, which is necessary to implement the basic principles of treating each site individually and holistically. Close connection and shared values with the Play Programmes Team is an essential component of an approach that puts children and young people at the heart of the thinking about play areas. Design, construction, development and maintenance of play areas is informed by continuing work in communities with children and young people. The structure of the service makes children and young people's involvement possible and natural.

The importance of design

The council is unusual in the UK for routinely using a play space designer (with specialist expertise in play) alongside a landscape designer (with design and technical expertise). The most successful schemes are those where the play and landscape designers work closely together and each are able to fully utilise their expertise. All major refurbishments and new projects are professionally designed. The design process includes contributions and involvement of others in gradually building the brief, and agreeing a final costed design. The design process is regarded as so important that the council commits to pay design costs even for aspirational projects that are initiated with no capital budget yet identified.

Stirling Council's integrated approach driven by a clear vision for children's play has enabled it to implement a wide range of high quality schemes.

For more information, contact:
Children's Services – Play Services, Stirling Council, Unit 12, Back O'Hill Industrial Estate, Back O'Hill Road, Stirling , FK8 1SH, tel 01786 430120, play@stirling.gov.uk
Sue Gutteridge, Play Consultancy, tel 0131 662 9984, suegutteridge@btinternet.com.

Acknowledgements

Play England and the authors would like to thank the following people for their help with this guide

Alexandra Allen, Julia Bard, Daniel Black, Chris Carswell, Anna Chapman, Issy Cole-Hamilton, Neil Coleman, Paul Collings, Nicole Collomb, Hattie Coppard, Noel Farrer, Richard Ferrington, Matthew Frith, Andy Furze, Evan Giles, Tim Gill, Robert Goss, Janet Gowran, Mike Greenaway, Sue Gutteridge, Phil Heaton, Liz Hoehnke, Deborah Holt, Sarah Jardine, Alex Kettrick, Warren Koehler, Judi Legg, Dye Lockyer, Guy Lockear, Colin Mackay, Sandra Melville, Karen Merrick, Jon Mitchell, Karen Newell, Simeon Packard, Keith Rimmer, Mark Rooney, Joanna Ryam, Ken Ryan, Rachel Scott, Sandra Skinner, Carol Spencer, Bernard Spiegal, Stairway Communications Limited, Robin Sutcliffe, Joe Taylor, Wendy Titman, Adrian Voce, Bob Wallace, Stuart Wallace, Nick Waller, Rob Wheway, Adrian Wikeley, Helen Woolley, Andrew Yates, David Yearley.

You can download this publication or order copies online at
www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

Search using the ref: 00631-2008

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:
DCSF Publications
PO Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottingham NG15 0DJ
Tel: 0845 60 222 60
Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Textphone: 0845 60 555 60

Please quote the ref: 00631-2008DOM-EN

ISBN: 978-1-84775-225-3

D16(7588P)/0708/14

75% recycled
This leaflet is printed on 75% recycled paper

recycle
When you have finished with this leaflet please recycle it

CABE SPACE

Supported by
The National Lottery®
through the Big Lottery Fund

BIG LOTTERY FUND

national children's bureau

Play England is part of the National Children's Bureau and is supported by the Big Lottery Fund.