

Inclusive and Accessible Play

Play areas in new developments, and their subsequent replacement/upgrading, must be inclusive and accessible, providing children and young people of different abilities with equal access to high quality social and play provision.

Inclusive and Wheelchair Exclusive Play Equipment

At least 50% of play equipment provided in play areas must be to inclusive standards and integrated throughout the layout. Inclusive means equipment that is designed to be used by children of all ages and abilities, including those with disabilities. A variety of equipment must be provided that meets the needs of different ages, groups and abilities.

For larger parks, wheelchair exclusive equipment must also be provided. This is equipment that is designed to be used by those in a wheelchair, either remaining in the chair or being transferred onto an item of equipment, and can only be used exclusively by those in a wheelchair (i.e. wheelchair swing).

Based on the park hierarchy set out in the Open Space Strategy, the minimum number of pieces of inclusive and wheelchair exclusive play equipment are:-

| Park Hierarchy | Total Pieces of Equipment | Inclusive | Non Inclusive | Wheelchair Exclusive |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------|---------------|----------------------|
| Public Park | 14 | 7 | 6 | 1 |
| Neighbourhood Park | 10 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Pocket Park | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 |

NOTE: A two swing set is considered to constitute a single piece of equipment.

The equipment provided in Public and Neighbourhood Parks must display all of the differing play values/types set out in the table below. Pocket Parks must display a minimum of 6 differing play values/types. All parks must provide opportunities for creative, imaginative and sensory play as well as space for social interactions.

A statement must be provided evidencing how the design and implementation of the play area meets the equipment and play values/types requirements. It should be noted that wheelchair swings are excluded from assessment against 'Swinging'.

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Running, skipping and/or hopping | Rocking |
| Climbing | Rotating or spinning |
| Swinging | Gliding |
| Sliding | Jumping |
| Balancing | Crawling |

In addition to these play equipment requirements, sensory panels and/or instruments must also be provided in all parks. This is equipment that stimulates the senses and may be tactile, auditory or visual. Sensory planting is also encouraged in landscaping proposals.

Accessibility

Accessibility is defined as surfacing and paths which do not present physical barriers to participation, including entrances and exits, movement around space and access to equipment (play and non-play). Proposals for play areas must be located where paths and recreational spaces are on gradients that are suitably flat. Surfacing, paths and benches (inclusive and wheelchair-friendly) must be designed to be fully accessible to people of all ages and abilities. This means that materials used must prevent any barriers to access, such as grass matting or wetpour. The use of play bark chippings and raised play areas will not be acceptable.

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken by the Planning Authority as part of the assessment of play area proposals. The annotated photographs below provide some advice when designing a play area.





Good mix of equipment for different ages and abilities but on a slope which impacts on accessibility.



Good mix of inclusive equipment but could be expanded to cater for all ages.



Good use of colour, utilising accessible materials and providing a variety of equipment.





Provision of wheelchair exclusive play equipment but not accessible due to lack of path provision to use equipment.



Provision of inclusive equipment but not accessible due to lack of path provision to the equipment.



Close proximity of disabled car parking spaces and accessible path to play area.



Poor access into play area with no footpath and inappropriate gradient meaning it is not accessible for all.



Raised play areas and bark chippings are unacceptable

