

Sutton-in-Craven Parish Council

Play Policy

The purpose of writing a play policy is to have a set of values and standards we can all agree on.

There are many issues involved in providing for children's play, including Safety and risk; Equipment, Improving quality and training.

Play is an important part of a child's life and essential to their development and happiness.

Why Play is Important?

"Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."

'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child'

Play is how children develop skills, physical, social and intellectual

'United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child'

"The right to play is a child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens"

'David Lloyd George'

Play provides opportunities to test out themselves and others

'United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child'

"By playing, children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community"

(Best Play, NPFA 2002)

"The Child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation and society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right"

'United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child'

Play enables children to learn through experience. Play is an instinctive and universal activity. All children play. Through exploring and testing ideas, children learn about their bodies, about how to socialise and about the world around them.

Children of different ages, interests and circumstances want different things from a play space. Children need places where they can:

- Choose and take control of their own play activities
- Enjoy themselves with or without the supervision of adults
- Play by themselves or with others
- Experience a varied and interesting physical environment
- Challenge and broaden the limits of their physical, mental, emotional or creative abilities
- Feel safe from dangers

Managing Risk – Summary Statement

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

(From Play Safety Forum Statement on Managing Risk in Play Provision)

All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury.

Children must be given the chance to stretch themselves, test and develop their abilities without exposing them to unacceptable risks. This is part of a wider adult social responsibility to children. If we do not provide controlled opportunities for children to encounter and manage risk then they may be denied the chance to learn these skills. They may be more likely to choose to play in uncontrolled environments where the risks are greater.

Any injury is distressing for children and those who care for them. Exposure to risk of injury, and experience of actual minor injuries, is part of childhood. Such experiences also have a positive role in child development. When children sustain or see injuries they gain experience of the consequences of their actions and choices, and through this they learn

the extent of abilities and competences. However, children deserve protection against fatal or permanently disabling injuries, to a greater degree than adults.

It is important to give children appropriate controlled environments in which they can learn about risk.

1. STATEMENT

To provide where possible, a safe and accessible play areas and maximise the range of play opportunities.

To extend the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

An improved play area encourages a stronger community drawing together all ages, parents, carers and children, socially creating a greater sense of wellbeing. The value of play is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth and for intellectual, educational and social development.

2. STATEMENT

To ensure parish play facilities meet the criteria for quality play environments.

The provision recognises a child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.

Play provision should aim to “manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm”.

Play sector publication Best Play

Hence it is acceptable that in play provision children may be exposed to risk of minor and easily-healed injuries such as grazes, bruises or sprains. On the other hand, play provision should not expose children to significant likelihood of permanent disability or life-threatening injuries. However it may on occasions be unavoidable that play provision exposes children to the risk –the very low risk – of serious injury or even death. But this would only be tolerable in the following conditions;

- The likelihood were extremely low;
- The hazards were clear to users;
- There were obvious benefits;
- Further reduction of the risk would remove the benefits;
- There were no reasonable practicable ways to manage the risk.

We recognise the importance of play and aim to minimise the risk of accidents and help provide a safer environment for children to enjoy.

3. STATEMENT

To monitor, assess and review play areas and take note of new research into safety standards.

Manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.

A Position Statement by the National Play Safety Forum

“We consider Managing Risks in Play Provision to be an important document that will contribute to the debate on the provision of children’s play. It articulates the balance between the benefit and the need for children to play against the duty of play providers to provide safe play. We must not lose sight of the important developmental role of play for children in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety. It makes clear that the safety must be considered at all stages of play provision but that, inevitably, there will be risk of injury when children play, as there is risk of injury in life generally. The important message is that there must be freedom from unacceptable risk of life-threatening or permanently disabling injury in play.”

Health and Safety Executive

To modify and update policies as new information, legislation and standards order.

Accidents arise from many causes:

- . Inappropriate design and layout of play areas**
- . Unsuitably designed play equipment**
- . Incorrectly installed equipment**
- . Inadequately maintained equipment**
- . Lack of age – and ability – related equipment**
- . Lack of adult supervision**
- . Aggressive or dangerous behaviour of children**
- . Misuse of equipment**
- . Unsuitable clothing worn by children**

4. STATEMENT

To carry out routine daily checks and monthly recorded inspections of play areas. In addition a fully documented annual Inspection is carried out by an independent Inspector.

Sites should be visually inspected daily for defects and faults to equipment in addition to general cleanliness and removal of dangerous objects.

Monthly inspections should be more ‘in depth’ and cover benches, beck/banking/boating lake , bowling green, bridges, gardens, gates, litter bins, paths, playing fields, putting

green, railings shelters, signs, steps trees, walls and war memorial in addition to the play equipment and their surfaces.

The documented annual inspections shall be carried out in accordance with current legislation by an independent inspector.

5. STATEMENT

To monitor safety by keeping records of maintenance, reported injuries and serious incidents on its play areas.

The information can be taken in to account when planning new play areas and updating existing ones.

6. STATEMENT

To liaise with the community parents, schools & Children and take account of children's needs when updating or replacing equipment.

Researching information i.e. The Parish Plan, studying children at play, seeking views on play facilities, specialist advice. Information to be taken into account when planning future play areas.

7. STATEMENT

To produce a plan and update and amend as necessary as legislation or standards dictate.

All information gained from consultations with the community and any accidents/incidents reported.

8. STATEMENT

To encourage play schemes, to provide where possible.

To support existing schemes in the community and encourage experience of the natural environment.

Woodlands, nature trails, conservation etc

9. STATEMENT

We aim to meet the needs of all children in an inclusive way.

Every child has their own special needs. Disability, race, gender or parental income should not be obstacles to children playing together.

Play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

Although the play space should be accessible to all, this does not mean that all children need to be able to do everything within a play space.

Play promotes respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.

10. STATEMENT

To promote parent awareness of their responsibility to children at play and seek their help to provide a safe environment in which they can play.

This can be achieved by literature.

- Parental/adult supervision in play grounds
- Prevention of children acting aggressively or dangerously on equipment
- Wearing of sensible clothing and shoes
- Consultation

11. STATEMENT

To make play area's in the parish 'Dog Free Areas' and all recreation grounds 'Dogs on Leads' and 'poop scoop' areas.

Local authorities have a duty to keep designated areas in their control, including parks and Children's' playgrounds, as clear of dog faeces as is practicable under par IV of the Environmental Act 1990

SUMMARY

The Play Policy is designed to take account of all statutory requirements in addition to this Council's commitment to provide safe formal play areas and environmental opportunities within the confines of its budget facilities.

Sutton Parish Council acknowledges the:

Value of play as essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth and for intellectual, educational and social development.

Need to Update/or replace old and defective equipment.

Need to recognise the expected 'life' of existing equipment and create a replacement plan.

Need to consult and liaise with parents, children and ensure future equipment will be

enjoyed and put to full use.

Importance of acceptable levels of risk in play and the responsibility to make sure children are not exposed to unacceptable risk of death or permanently disabling injury

Importance of Inspections and ensure these are carried out as set in this policy.

Educate parents/guardians to be aware of their responsibility to their charges at play.

For all children to access play spaces for all children regardless of ability or background.

To provide fencing with gates around play areas and install signs, in prominent positions, advising that these areas are dog free and Recreation Grounds are 'dogs on leads' and 'poop scoop' areas.

IMPLEMENTATION

To enable implementation of the Play Policy, Sutton Parish Council needs to :

Ensure awareness of the Play Policy within the Council, its Staff and throughout the village.

Consider creating a 'replacement fund', which can be added to each year to enable implementation of the policies.

The following references informed the formulation of this play policy document.

Best Play: What play provision should do for children (2000)

Jointly published by National Playing Fields Association, Playlink, Children's Play Council and funded by Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Play Safety Forum Position Statement (2008) From the Children's Play Council Website.

Play England - www.playengland.org.uk

Playlink – www.playlink.org.uk

Freeplay Network – www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk

ROSPA – www.rospa.com/playsafety