



**Guidance on the use  
and inspection of fixed  
outdoor play equipment**



Coventry City Council

[www.coventry.gov.uk](http://www.coventry.gov.uk)

## Introduction

This guidance aims to set standards with inspection and maintenance requirements in accordance with industry best practice, whilst giving a sensible, proportionate risk based approach with the use of equipment. Fixed play equipment should be exciting and challenging to use, it is important to recognise that equipment should be suitable for the required age range and environment i.e. supervised or non-supervised. Children more often than not will recognise their own physical ability and assess what they are capable of achieving when using the equipment. The provision of fixed play equipment should not be avoided for fear of litigation, effective safety management systems should be developed, implemented; it is vital that the systems are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Current health and safety legislation although not specific to fixed play equipment, places a duty of care upon the employer/owner to provide safe and maintained equipment, this duty extends to equipment used by visitors and members of the public. The provision also requires hazards and associated risk to be suitably managed, and requests that children are not exposed to unreasonable risk or unexpected hazards whilst playing.

## Equipment use

It is recognised that it is not possible to remove all hazards from play areas, but it is possible to control residual risk. Children should be allowed to learn about safety whilst experiencing an accepted level of risk. It is important that risk assessments are developed, implemented and monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are still effective.

The principal hazards associated with fixed play equipment are:

- Falls from height
- Being struck by moving objects
- Collisions, trips and slips
- Entrapment and entanglement
- Sharp objects (glass, needles) etc.
- Animal faeces
- Rough surfaces

In order to minimise the risk appropriate controls should be developed, the following should all be considered as part of the process:

- Developing effective safety management systems
- Being satisfied that the equipment is suitable for the age range of children
- Ensuring that appropriate levels of supervision is available
- Having robust documented inspection and maintenance procedures in place
- Accident trend analysis systems

In open parks where supervision is not provided, systems should be developed to ensure that members of the public are issued with relevant information; this could be in the form of signage. Seated areas adjacent to the equipment could be considered in particular within play areas designed for younger children.

# Equipment inspection

Regular inspection of fixed play equipment should be organised and undertaken by trained competent people, evidence should be available demonstrating actions required and rectifications.

Inspection type	Frequency	Description
Routine	Daily/weekly (dependent upon use)	Inspectors can be city council employees; they are required to have proven their ability via examination.  The certificate of competency is valid for three years, after such time re-examination is required.
Operational	Quarterly (termly in schools)	Inspectors can be city council employees; they are required to have proven their ability via a written and practical examination.  The certificate of competency is valid for three years, after such time re-examination is required.
Annual and post installation	Annual or post installation	Annual and post installation inspections should be carried out by an independent competent person.  The Annual Inspector has proven his/her ability via a series of examinations and re-assessment every 3 years.

## Further information

Fixed outdoor play daily check sheet

[http://beacon.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/144/playgrounds\\_safety](http://beacon.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/144/playgrounds_safety)

<http://www.playinspectors.com/RPII-Inspectors>

<http://www.api-play.org/api-member-details/outdoor-manufacturers>.

<http://www.rospa.com/leisuresafety/adviceandinformation/playsafety/default.aspx>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>

Play England – Managing risk in play provision

## Legislation and relevant standards

Health and Safety at Work act 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

The Occupiers Liability Act (1957, revised 1984)

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

EN 1176/77

## Contacts

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Generation and Community Team 3257  
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If you need this information in another language or format please contact Occupational Health on 024 7683 3255