

Playground Equipment

Version: 1.4

Date: 11th November 2024

Play areas and equipment help children explore risk safely as part of their play. They must follow the latest design standards for an acceptable level of risk and be regularly maintained.

Introduction

Children's playgrounds should be fun but inevitably carry an element of risk. Most children endure bumps and scrapes **throughout their childhood. It's the duty of play area providers**, whether public or within private establishments, to ensure risks are reduced to an acceptable level and are not a result of provider negligence.

Accidents Happen

Playground accidents are always going to occur, whether through bad luck or:

- Misuse of the equipment by children
- Children using equipment unsuitable for their age
- Inadequate supervision of the children

However, occasionally they happen as a result of:

- Poor equipment design
- Poor equipment inspection and maintenance
- Poor layout of the playground
- Failure to provide and maintain a suitable playing surface

In such circumstances, the providers of the equipment could be in breach of their legal obligations under health and safety legislation.

It is essential that a risk assessment is carried out and documented to identify the safety precautions that need to be in place for the safe use and operation of play equipment provided. The information provided below has been compiled for use by owners and operators of children's playgrounds in order to help them comply with their legal obligations.

Code of Good Practice for Play Areas

Essential safety considerations relating to playground safety can be found in the [Code of Good Practice for Play Areas](#), which is available on the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) website. This provides guidance on:

- Siting
- Design
- Surfacing
- Installation
- Ancillary items such as seats and litter bins
- Signs
- Management



Reducing but not Eliminating all Risks

Play provision offers children the opportunity to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment.

Providers of play areas and equipment can ensure risks are reduced to an acceptable level by ensuring play equipment and play areas are designed to the current standards (EN 1176) and are regularly checked for defects and properly maintained. This approach is endorsed by organisations including many of the ones mentioned under 'Sources and Useful Links' section below.

Key Action Steps

- Get competent advice when designing a new play area or when planning to refurbish or update an existing area
- Establish a robust purchasing policy for new play equipment
- Carry out and record a risk assessment or review any existing assessment of the playground equipment
- Give consideration to whether the equipment complies with the new standards or not and what action is needed to make it comply
- Establish a regular inspection and maintenance regime for play areas
- Take into account the typical usage of the equipment and likely damage or wear and tear from previous inspection and maintenance records
- Make reference to accident records and reports including incidents with the potential for a more serious outcome
- Develop a prioritised action plan to address any deficiencies identified by assessment

Checklist

A generic Playground Equipment Checklist is presented in Appendix 1 which can be tailored to your own organisation.

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Sources and Useful Links

- [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#)
- [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents \(RoSPA\)](#)
- [RoSPA – Risk Assessment of Children’s Play Areas](#)
- [Association of Play Industries](#)
- [PLAYLINK](#)
- [Child Accident Prevention Trust](#)
- [Play England](#)
- [Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity](#)
- [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children](#)
- [Five Steps to Risk Assessment \(HSE\)](#)

To find out more, please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or speak to one of our advisors.

Email us at riskadvice@aviva.com or call 0345 366 6666.*

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Appendix 1: Playground Equipment Checklist



Location	
Date	
Completed by (name and signature)	

	Playground Equipment Checklist	Y/N	Comments
1.	Have you obtained competent advice when designing a new play area or when planning to refurbish or update an existing area?		
2.	Have you established a robust purchasing policy for new play equipment?		
3.	Have you carried out and recorded a risk assessment or reviewed any existing assessment of the playground equipment?		
4.	Have you considered whether existing play equipment complies with the current safety standards (EN 1176) or not and what action is needed to make it comply?		
5.	Have you established a regular inspection and maintenance regime for play areas and provided training to persons responsible for undertaking these?		
6.	Have you reviewed the typical usage of the equipment and likely damage or wear and tear from previous inspection and maintenance records when determining inspection frequencies and maintenance schedules?		
7.	Have you reviewed accident records and reports including incidents with the potential for a more serious outcome when carrying out your risk assessments?		
8.	Have you developed a prioritised action plan to address any deficiencies identified by items 1 to 7 of this checklist?		

9.	Additional comments:		
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