

Safety

CDM regulations

The construction of some play structures will fall within the CDM Regulations to ensure they are designed and constructed safely by a competent person. See OGB40 or contact a landscape architect or civil engineer to find out if this applies.

European standards

The European standard for children's play is EN1176 and for play surfaces is EN1177. While these standards provide the framework for play they should be applied thoughtfully with regard to materials, aesthetics and level of challenge offered. In specifically designated play areas the standard applies, whereas encouraging natural play in a forest environment is likely to be regarded as being assessed to the 'spirit' of the standard (ie. to pick up high risks of injury).

Glossary

The notes below give some key definitions that are useful for designers and site managers; these are referred to throughout this document.

- **Forced movement:** motion in play that cannot be stopped once started (ie. swing or slide, or in the context of nature play jumping, rolling down a bank or slipping on a branch).
- **Fall heights:**
 - 1) Less than 600mm do not need a safety surface.
 - 2) BSI (British Standards Institute) advises that in the UK grass with a good soil depth that is in place all year round is suitable for fall heights of up to 1500mm. This does not apply to high-wear situations such as beneath swings or at equipment entry and exit points.
 - 3) Anything above 1000mm requires an impact absorbing surface such as bark or sand that will require regular maintenance (see EN1176/77).
 - 4) Maximum permitted fall height with an impact absorbing surface is 3000mm.
- **Free space:** the space occupied by undertaking the above movement
- **Falling space:** the space through and into which a user will fall free from hard objects that might cause injury. 1.5m in all directions from the point of fall must be free from sharp-edged stumps, large rocks or other potentially dangerous/sharp materials such as posts or metal objects (see EN1176/77).

- **Entrapment (objects that might wedge, snag or hold someone):**

- 1) Head and body:
 - 89–230 mm (children up to 3 years).
 - 110–230 mm (inaccessible to young children).
- 2) Head and neck traps: Junctions where a bottom angle is a 'V' shape (or 'U' less than 230 mm) and where one side does not slope to 30 degrees from horizontal into which someone might fall.
- 3) Clothing trap: Where a hood or toggle could be caught in an area of planned or accidental forced movement.
- 4) Finger traps: In the range 8–25 mm, if over 1.2 m high, or in an area of forced movement. No sharp edges.
- 5) Crush or shear: Moving parts that might create a head/body trap (less than 230 mm or finger trap (greater than 8 mm).

Inspection

All play equipment and areas specifically designated for play should be inspected annually by a RPII registered inspector. If in doubt ask for assistance from a landscape architect.

Useful resources

Statement from Play Safety Forum:
Managing Risk in Play www.ncb.org.uk

A Guide to the European Playground Equipment and Surfacing Standards; ROSPA 2002: www.rospa.com/playsafety.co.uk and www.playinspectors.com

For a simple guide on basic play equipment safety visit SMP's specifiers guide to EN1176 at www.smp.co.uk/cust_services/pdf/EN1176.pdf

The Free Play Network is for individuals and organisations aiming to promote better play opportunities for children.
www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/playlink/exhibition/index.html

Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces:
www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/designforplay/index.html

Some useful references

Growing Adventure

Report to FC Tim Gill, March 2006

Design Guidance for Play Spaces

Roger Worthington, Lindsey Houston
& Paddy Harrop, 2006

Managing Play Spaces and the European Standard

Paddy Harrop, March 2006

Rope Swings, Dens, Tree Houses and Fires

Paddy Harrop, March 2006

Growing Places for Play

Philippa Wood, 2004, PMS

Places for Play

Play Link 2004

Design for Play: A Guide to Creating Successful Play Spaces August 2008. ISBN 978-1-84775-225-3

Providing Children's Play in the Countryside: Countryside Commission for Scotland

1984. ISBN 0-902226-70-3

Or you can contact one of the FC landscape architects.

Some useful contractors and companies

Consultation

Dynamix (Moors Valley consultation)
W: www.dynamix.ltd.uk

Philippa Wood, Devon Play,
(Playing for Real)
T: 01392 383221

Some in-house experience at Rosliston,
West Mids. & SE England (Paul Cordle)

Design

Start with in-house landscape architects.

Sue Gutteridge/Judy Legg (Stirling)
T: 01786 465799
E: judilegg@hotmail.com

Construction

Inevitably playground construction companies will want to sell you standard components from their catalogue range. The best of the companies will at least listen to your requirements and then choose what is most appropriate. There are some good companies with standard designs working in timber. These include:

Eibe
W: www.eibe.co.uk

Timberplay
W: www.timberplay.com

Sik Holz
(Using Robinia wood makes structures look natural, but importing from the continent precludes local timber sourcing).
W: www.thechildrensplayground.com

At the other end of the spectrum are those play designers and manufacturers who are able to take your ideas and work them into a bespoke scheme.

Plane and Simple
W: www.planeandsimple.co.uk

Andy Frost
E: andy.sculptor.frost@googlemail.com

www.kulturinsel.de
(Speak with Chris Bray, Sherwood and Lincs)

Sculptures: Andris Berg and Henry Smith

Inspection

RPII accredited inspectors can be found at www.playinspectors.com

Due to the irregular and natural materials and the use of existing environments not all play inspectors are comfortable making assessments. Some that have worked with the FC in recent years who have experience of nature play are listed below.

Newton Ford (Play-It), Essex
T: 07771 617239
E: newton.ford@ntlworld.com

Rob Wheway
(The Child Accident Prevention Trust)
T: 02476 714784,
E: rob@wheway.demon.co.uk

Dave Potter
T: 023 9283 9097
W: www.playground-safety.co.uk

