

Free to Play

A guide to creating accessible and inclusive public play spaces

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Foreword

“ We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up, a nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people. Accessible and inclusive play spaces help to ensure that all our children and young people, including those with additional support needs, can exercise their right to play. Accessible and inclusive play spaces also make a hugely important contribution to local communities as welcoming, social gathering places. They should be recognised as important community assets, promoting health, well-being and a sense of community. This guide is comprehensive, practical and inspiring. It will help groups make informed choices and avoid common mistakes, and should be the first point of reference for all groups in Scotland wishing to make better spaces to play. ”



Maree Todd, MSP
Minister for Childcare and Early Years



Aileen Campbell, MSP
Minister for Public Health and Sport

“ The Active Scotland Outcomes Framework sets out our ambitions for a more active Scotland, and is underpinned by a commitment to equality. We want to ensure that people of all ages and from all communities across Scotland have the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity. Our aim is to ensure that Scotland’s open spaces and environment promotes increased levels of physical activity for everyone. Living close to accessible green space has been related to longer life expectancy, and populations living in greener environments have lower levels of income-related health inequality. Experience of the natural environment by young people can be life changing in terms of confidence, and skills that can enhance job opportunities. ”

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Section One: Introduction



Inclusive from the start

Who is this guide for?

This guide has been developed to assist any group that has come together to develop or improve a public play space. These groups may be friends of parks, community councils, community planning partnerships or groups of local parents, carers, professionals and youngsters who have identified a gap or recognised the need for improved space to play.

It can be used by funders to provide guidance to applicants and by local authorities to assist groups with their projects.

Aim of the guide

The guide will help to plot a route from initial planning to commissioning the design and build of a good place to play. To create these play spaces, attention must be given to access and inclusion so that children of different ages, abilities and play preferences are able to play together. Access and inclusion are integral to the approach taken in this guide.

It provides reminders, tips, templates and advice for when you are wondering what needs to be done next. It provides signposting to organisations that can help. We hope that it will make the journey towards a good place to play more manageable.

How to use it

It will be helpful if your group has considered certain ideas right at the beginning and these are contained in the **key concepts** section. If in doubt you can return to these ideas every so often. Other suggestions and information will be useful at different points in the overall process.

It can take quite some time from the initial idea to the day when you open the play space; different people will be involved in carrying out a wide variety of tasks. This means that not everyone in a group will need all the information. For example, one person may handle consultation activities and another fundraising. The guide also suggests creating various plans. These don't have to start fully formed or be done all at once. Changes can be made as you go along.

With this in mind, the guide has been designed so that you can **dip in and out** as information is required. Groups that have been through the whole process tend to say that though they have encountered some challenges along the way, they have also learnt a lot, found many generous supporters in the community and the end result has been worth all the effort.

“Be positive, patient and persistent”

(Lyndsay Elliot, Friends of Oban Community Playpark, winner Nancy Ovens Award for Play, 2017)

Points of reference for this guide

The reference points used in the guide may also be useful for your group when setting out the case for developing a play space to potential funders and partners.

Why play space?

Providing freely-accessible public play spaces in our communities is one of the important ways we recognise and support children's right to play. In well-designed and located play spaces children can enjoy all the freedom, fun, sociability and the thrills and spills associated with playing. By protecting space for play we demonstrate that children's play matters.

Local communities are often the driving force behind campaigning for, fundraising and developing really good spaces for play, often in partnership with the local authority. It isn't possible for every play space to meet all the play needs of every child and play spaces shouldn't all be replicas of each other. It is important however that there are diverse community spaces in local areas which can accommodate children's play needs in different ways.

The Play Strategy for Scotland

The Strategy asserts that all children and young people should have the opportunity to play every day. The Strategy is underpinned by three principles:

- we should value all children and young people
- we should enable all children and young people to realise their right to play
- all children and young people should have the space and time to play. (The 'Sufficiency' Principle).

This guide supports these principles and emphasises the importance of accessible and inclusive play spaces to achievement of the Play Strategy goals.

Sources

A range of source material from the UK and beyond was used to develop the guide. References are included throughout so that you can find more detail.

The guide is also informed by surveys undertaken in 2017 with families, carers and with groups who had recently undertaken the exciting task of developing a play space. Those surveys built on *Playing with quality and equality: a review of inclusive play in Scotland* (2015), research undertaken by Scotland's Play Strategy Implementation Group.

Playing with quality and equality found that disabled and disadvantaged children and young people face multiple barriers to play in their everyday lives. One of the key themes to emerge was that 'the quality of physical environments makes a hugely significant difference to the quality of children and young people's experience and opportunities for play'.

The review recommended that established play principles and the principles of Universal Design be promoted when creating spaces to play. These principles are covered in this guide.

'Live' case studies

At the time of writing this guide, Dumfries and Galloway Council had made an investment in play parks in Dumfries, Stranraer and Annan. The objective was to improve inclusive provision and to maximise opportunities by working with local community and voluntary groups in the three locations. The guide has been greatly enhanced by the opportunity to engage with the groups and council officers involved in the process. This helped clarify the kind of information and advice that community groups might need but which can be hard to find.

The lead group for the development of Catherine Street Play Park in Dumfries was the Parents Inclusion Network (PIN) which supports parents in the region who have a disabled son or daughter of any age. The PIN working group generously shared their experiences of places to play and allowed examples from their group's play space project to be included in this guide.

Children's right to play

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the basis for children's rights. It was adopted by the United Nations in 1989.

Article 31

All children have a right to play:
...the right of the child 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.
Article 31 has a strong relationship with the Convention as a whole, supporting realisation of other rights, for example:

Article 23

Disabled children have a right to dignity, self-reliance and active participation in the community.

Article 12

Children have the right to express their views on all matters of concern to them. Their age and maturity should be taken into account, and if necessary, they should receive support to express their views.

General comment no.17

A General comment is an official document published by the United Nations. General comments are published to give guidance to governments and to tell them in more detail what is expected of them. The UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child published a General Comment on article 31 in 2013, known as General comment no.17 (GC17).

Within GC17, the Committee wrote extensively on the play rights of disabled children reminding us that disabled children are entitled to expect equal and active opportunities in play. On inclusive environments more generally, the Committee set out that shared experience of inclusive public spaces promotes and strengthens civil society and encourages children to recognise themselves as citizens with rights.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Article 7

Children with disabilities have the right of full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.

Article 9

People with disabilities have the right to equal access to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, facilities and services.

Article 3

People with disabilities have the right to equal access to play, recreation, sporting and leisure activities.

"Accessible and inclusive environments and facilities must be made available to children with disabilities to enable them to enjoy their rights under article 31."

(Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013).

Short glossary

Accessible and inclusive

Accessibility refers to equal access to the physical environment, transport, information, facilities and services. In relation to play spaces, accessible design would seek to minimise environmental and physical barriers to participation including, for example, entrances, movement around the space, ease of access to the features or opportunities within the space, types of surfaces used, width of gates and paths, steepness of inclines, ease of access to play equipment, location and access to and from the site. (See *Access Chain* on p19).

Inclusive: accessibility alone is not sufficient to create an inclusive play space as social factors and play value should also be considered. It may not be possible for every child to access every feature or opportunity of the space in the same way, however an inclusive play space aims to enable satisfying play opportunities for all children.

In inclusive play spaces disabled and non-disabled can play together. Creative design solutions are sought to ensure opportunities for all children to actively engage in play in their own way and to provide plenty of variety for high play value. (See *section four*).

All children. In this guide, 'children' or 'children and young people' can be assumed to refer to children of a range of ages, abilities, stages and play preferences, all of whom should have the opportunity to realise their right to play without discrimination of any kind.

Where it is necessary to make a specific point in the guide the term 'disabled child/adult' or 'non-disabled child/adult' has been used. This form of language reflects the social model of disability described on p8 of this guide. Where different terminology is used in a direct quote the original form has been retained (as in the UN's CRPD and CRC).

Loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways when children play with them. Loose parts can be natural or synthetic and might include recycled materials such as old tyres, cardboard boxes and wooden pallets, natural materials such as autumn leaves, logs, straw, bits and pieces such as ropes, pegs, etc. The addition of loose parts to a play space opens up opportunities for children to play in a wider range of ways (see play types p8) often involving construction, imagination, creativity, social experiences.

Definitions for the following can be found in Section two: key concepts

- **affordance**
- **play**
- **play value**
- **risk benefit.**

Section one references

Documents for section one can be found at the following websites

Scottish Government www.scotland.gov.uk

- *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision*. (2013)
- *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan*. (2013)
- *Playing with quality and equality: a review of inclusive play in Scotland*. (2015)

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights <http://ohchr.org/EN/Pages/Home.aspx>

Click through from 'Human Rights Bodies' for:

- *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* (1989)
- *General comment no.17 on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)* (2013)
- *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)* (2006)

International Play Association (IPA) Scotland www.ipascotland.org

- *Children's right to play – a booklet for a richer understanding of article 31* (2016)

Section Two: Key Concepts

Think about play – does your group have a shared understanding of what is meant by play? How you define play might make a difference to what you are aiming for in the play space.

The following contains the most widely accepted definition of play.

Play: Children's play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end.

Play involves the exercise of autonomy, physical, mental or emotional activity, and has the potential to take infinite forms, either in groups or alone. These forms will change and be adapted throughout the course of childhood.

The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity.

Together, these factors contribute to the enjoyment it produces and the consequent incentive to continue to play.

(Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013:6)

Play is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.

Play has the potential to take infinite forms



What kinds of behaviours and experiences make up playing?

Play types: Play types are different behaviours we can see when children are playing.

If you watch children playing at a beach or park you might see make believe, jumping, splashing, clapping games, rough and tumble, hiding, daydreaming, building and much more.

Play theorist Bob Hughes explains that 'each play type is both distinctly and subtly different from the others'.

In play space design, play types help to broaden our idea of what children do when they are playing. The design should support a wide range of play, not all physical or equipment based.

The success of a play space can be judged not just by how many children go there but what happens there and how long children are immersed in play.

"Let's make play spaces open to exploring, journeying, hiding and seeking and open-ended adventures."

- Creative play
- Exploratory play
- Mastery play
- Object play
- Communication play
- Dramatic play
- Role play
- Social play
- Rough and tumble play
- Locomotor play
- Deep play
- Fantasy play
- Imaginative play
- Recapitulative play
- Symbolic play

Key play and design concepts

In these two pages you will find an introduction to four key play and design concepts which support playful and inclusive outcomes from the design process.

“The thing my children like best about play areas is the swings and slide. But most importantly the independence to have a go at it themselves (safely).”

Risk and challenge: In play provision, a degree of risk is often beneficial, if not essential. Children and young people enjoy challenging, adventurous play opportunities where they can test themselves and extend their abilities. Giving children the chance to encounter risk and challenge provides other benefits, such as learning how to assess and manage these and similar risks for themselves, gaining increased confidence, physical skills etc.

The degree of risk and challenge children seek through play, and in what form, varies from child to child. Disabled children have an equal right to other children to play freely without being unduly overprotected (IPA, 2014) and perhaps an even greater need for opportunities to take risks in play, since they may be denied the freedom of choice enjoyed by their non-disabled peers (Play Safety Forum, 2002).

Children and young people should not be exposed to risk of serious injury and harm. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. The Health and Safety Executive (2012) has recognised that accidents and mistakes happen during play but also that:

“Play is great for children’s well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.”

Risk Benefit Assessment brings together consideration of both risks and benefits when deciding on appropriate courses of action. (See p43).

Managing risk in open-ended play and adventure



How will the play space support a rich range of play?



Affordance and play value

When children play in an environment or with an object they experience it in a unique way. The ‘affordances’ of an object or space are all the things it has the potential to do or be for different children. A swing for example may have been created to swing on, but children may use it as a gathering place; to sit and chat; they may stand on it and yell; it’s a place to put your collection of leaves; it’s a barrier in hide and seek and so on.

The term ‘play value’ is also used to describe the value an environment, object or piece of equipment brings to children’s experience of play. Something may be described as having high play value if children are able to play with it in many different ways, integrate it into their own play or use it to expand or elaborate on their own ideas and actions. A tree stump may have huge play value as a spark to the imagination: a stage, a den, a prison, to jump off or lie on.

The play value of a play space is not therefore associated solely with the variety or quantity of equipment but with all the ways children can play in the whole space.

Natural environments can form the foundation for a play space or be integrated into them. Features such as grassy mounds, planting, logs and boulders etc. have great play value to children.

“They can be what they want using their imagination such as an astronaut, mountain climber or goodies vs baddies. They can use sticks as swords or use stones as stepping stones to get across water.”

Layers of play, access and inclusion

You might think about the play space as having a number of layers.

At the base you create a play space which people can access and move around in. The core elements are accessible entrances, exits, paths, landscaping, amenities and significant features of the site.

In the next layer, are the experiences in the play space. Not everything in the site needs to be (or can be) accessible to everyone in the same way. In this layer you might find your main play features such as water play, equipment, structures, art pieces, planting, designing for the senses.

Another layer of richness is added when you think about how the space will be used. Public play areas are designed to be safe and useable without supervision. The possibilities for inclusive opportunities can be multiplied however by the presence of experienced playworkers at certain times and other adults who bring skills in facilitating play. For example:

- play rangers or community playworkers who run sessions at the play space and bring 'loose parts' to facilitate play
- public play days with a range of extra play opportunities on site
- group outings
- local early learning and childcare visits to increase their outdoor opportunities for children.

At the early stages of designing the space you might think about designing in features that will make these additional activities easier, for example:

- gathering places
- shelter
- storage for loose parts play resources
- notice boards
- adaptable structures that can be enhanced for play (e.g. den building, hanging a hammock, adding sails, treasure hunts).

Although less obvious when looking at a design on the page, sensory and sometimes ephemeral qualities can be what make a play space special for children.

The play space may already include trees or plants which bring the sound of bird song, textures from rough bark, smooth leaves or jaggy thorns, colours that change with the seasons, a view of the sky through the branches of the tree. **These qualities have play value.** Some play spaces become all but unusable in very frosty or very hot weather because of the materials (e.g. lots of metal, synthetic surfaces) and equipment. Others are enhanced by different weather and seasons.

What is more fascinating to a child – a plastic 'sensory' panel on play equipment or coming across a cobweb, earwigs under a stone, frost on a pile of leaves, a frozen puddle?

The sensory environment may also present barriers to play such as wind across the site, obtrusive noise or confusing visual signals. **Sensory mapping** is a useful technique to discover some of the less obvious sensory qualities of the play space.

The final layer to consider is that children and young people bring the space to life by playing. Children play in unexpected or unintended ways and the design should take that into account. Some areas of the play space may be really popular and so have more wear and tear or become overcrowded at times.

#tip The best play spaces evolve. Consider how you might plan for changes based on observations of children and young people playing there over a period of time.



The best play spaces evolve

Children and young people bring the space to life by playing

Unexpected, unintended.

Sensory and ephemeral qualities

Bird song, textures, rough, smooth, jaggy, colours, change, seasons, a view of the sky, weather.

Sensory barriers – wind, noise or confusing signals.

Richness

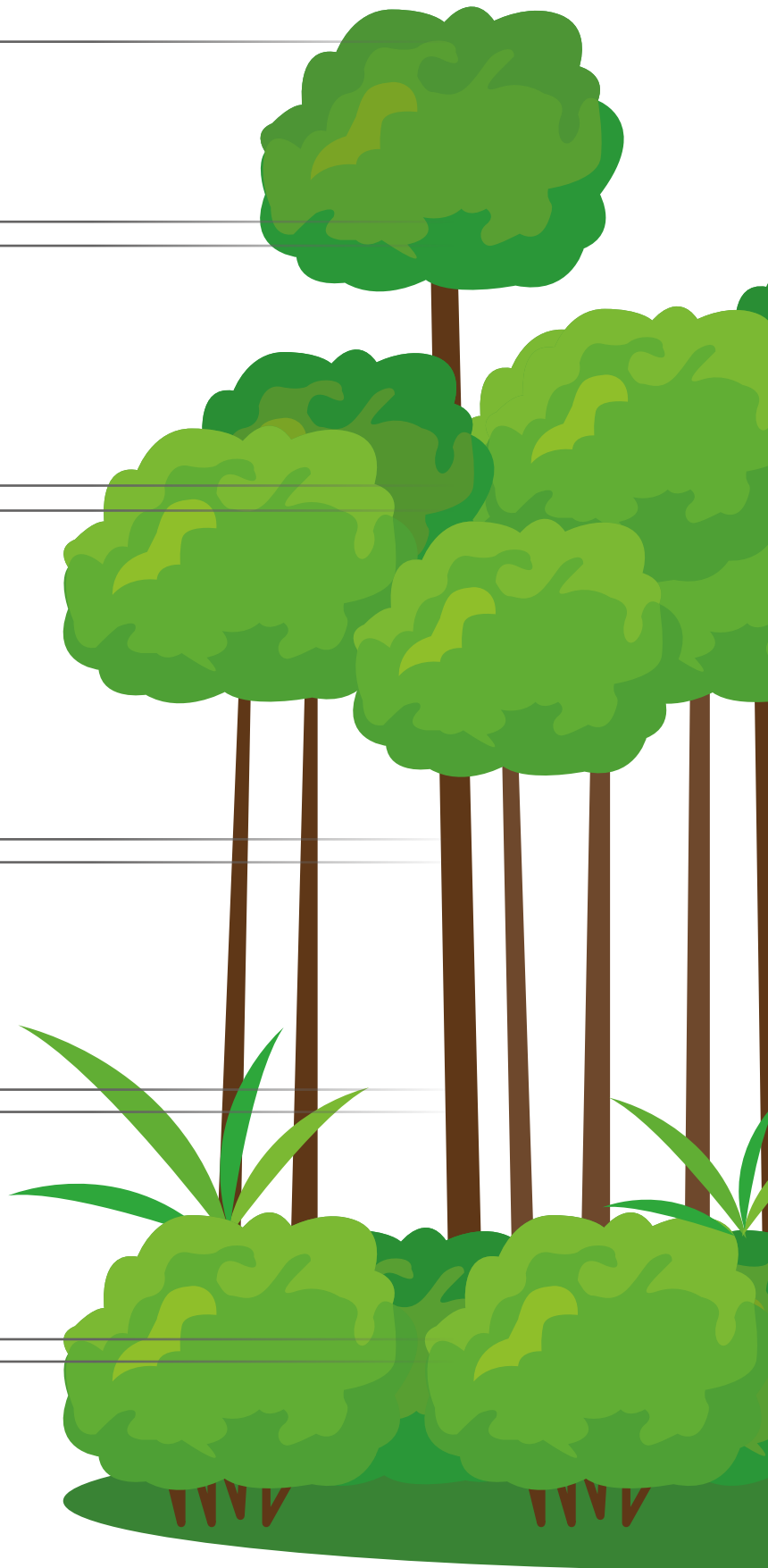
Playing, loose parts, gathering places, shelter, storage, notice boards, adaptable structures.

Experiences

Main play features, water play, equipment, structures, art pieces, planting, designing for the senses.

The base

Access, movement, entrances, exits, paths, landscaping, amenities, significant features.



Social model of disability

There are two distinct models of disability, the medical model and the social model.

In the medical model, disability is understood as an individual problem. If somebody has an impairment – a visual, mobility or hearing impairment, for example – their inability to see, walk or hear is understood as their disability.

The social model was created by disabled people themselves. It was primarily a result of society's response to them but also of their experience of the health and welfare system which made them feel socially isolated and oppressed.

Through the social model, disability is understood as an unequal relationship within a society in which the needs of people with impairments are often given little or no consideration.

People with impairments are disabled by the fact that they are excluded from participation within the mainstream of society as a result of physical, organisational and attitudinal barriers.

These barriers prevent them from gaining equal access to information, education, employment, public transport, housing and social/recreational opportunities.

Most people will experience disability at some point in their lives through illness, accident or ageing. For example, the lack of information in large print can be a disabling barrier to many older people as their eyesight changes over time and they are no longer able to read standard-size print.

Through the social model of disability, it is understood:

- that disability is a result of the barriers faced by people with impairments
- that while many individuals have physical or sensory impairments or learning difficulties or are living with mental health needs, it is not the individual's impairment which creates disability but the way in which society responds to these impairments.

This guide aims to follow and support the social model.

A useful guide to the social model of disability can be found at: www.saifscotland.org.uk





Section two references

Documents for section two can be found at the following websites

Health and Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk

- *Children's play and leisure – promoting a balanced approach* (2012)

Inspiring Scotland www.inspiringscotland.org.uk

- *Loose parts play – a toolkit* (2016)

Play Scotland www.playscotland.org

- *Play types – bringing more play into the school day* (2017)
- *Managing risk in play provision implementation guide 2nd edition*, (Play Safety Forum, 2013)
- *Managing risk in play provision position statement* (Play Safety Forum, 2002)

Scottish Accessible Information Forum www.saifscotland.org.uk

- *The social model of disability* (2009)

Other

- Hughes, B. (2006) *PlayTypes – speculations and possibilities*. London: The London Centre for Playwork Training and Education.

Section Three: Getting Organised



Making a project plan

What is a project plan?

A project plan outlines the main aims, tasks, timelines and responsibilities of your project, helping to maintain a sense of the bigger picture. It is sensible to check back on the project plan every so often and ask 'where are we now?'

Why is it important?

The project plan helps to:

- clarify aims and expectations
- save time in the long run
- ensure you have thought about all the various strands required to take you through the process
- keep the overall project on track and on budget
- identify where external advice or professional expertise would be of value
- show potential funders and partners that you have a solid basis for the project
- serves as a point of reference for everyone involved.

What does a project plan include?

The project plan needs to contain the major areas of work for the overall project but not all the fine detail – that will be contained in separate plans and action notes.

Overall vision	What is the project trying to achieve?
The case for the project	<p>What information is already known that would help make a case for the project?</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• evidence of demand from children and families• evidence about the value of play• evidence of gaps in accessible and inclusive play opportunities• local development plans (and information gathered for them)• demographic and statistical information (e.g. new housing is being built, the population is predicted to get younger)• current and historical information about the proposed site. <p>Do you need to gather more information or do some research to be able to answer the who, why, what, where, how questions of the project?</p> <p>Funders and other partners often wish to know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• who will benefit from the project?• how will they benefit?• how do you know this?• how long will it take?• how much will it cost? <p>Check the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation for local information that might help to make your case. http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD</p> <p>You can cut and paste the information gathered to make the case for the project to your communications and fundraising plans.</p>
Who will take it forward?	<p>Who will take the lead and steer the project, who can help and who are the partners and stakeholders?</p> <p>How will this be structured e.g. a committee, steering group, existing group etc.?</p>

Feasibility	<p>You may decide to undertake or commission a feasibility study for the project considering, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the pros and cons of the proposed site or site options • likely costs and possible funding options • partnership opportunities • legal obligations and responsibilities related to operating a play area • short, medium and long-term considerations for the ongoing development of the play space. <p>Who can help with assessing feasibility?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some groups undertake a feasibility study themselves with support from either the local authority or Third Sector Interface (see information at the end of this section). This removes a potential cost and can help build project buy-in at an early stage. • The local authority ought to be able to help guide the group through these considerations and to explain local practices and procedures, precedents and examples of similar projects. • The local Third Sector Interface should also be able to point you to a consultant or organisation to help do this. • Ask if they know of any firms which might give 'pro bono' support (carry out the task free of charge as a service to the community).
Budget and resources	<p>The project plan should contain the major lines of anticipated expenditure. These can then link through to the fundraising plan. Other resources such as help in kind, skills and assets can also be identified here.</p>
Risk management	<p>Think through possible risks to achievement of the project and identify your options for managing these risks. You can ask: 'What would happen if...?'</p> <p>Example Risk: a member of the steering group is unable to continue. Risk management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the steering group isn't too small so that extra tasks can be absorbed, at least temporarily • make sure all the project information is accessible so that if one person drops out for any reason the information doesn't disappear with them. <p>Example Risk: failure to secure anticipated budget Risk management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan the project in phases • consider which elements of the design could be pared back if the full budget isn't secured.
Organise tasks to make the workload manageable	<p>Can you take a team approach with different people taking the lead on various tasks? Do you have people with expertise and enthusiasm for the main areas?</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chairing a steering group • fundraising • consultation and engagement • communications • play design • children's participation. <p>Within the project plan you might indicate key information such as the agreed aims and objectives for each of these areas, how they relate to each other, who is taking the lead and who will assist the lead.</p> <p>The people responsible for each area can then draw up more detailed ideas and plans. The rest of this section provides ideas about creating these.</p>
Timelines Create a timeline including what you know about key dates, deadlines, milestones and realistic estimates of time required for tasks and decisions. The timeline may be divided into in phases.	<p>Take a look at what needs to happen when. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are there funding application deadlines to work to? • if successful, will the funder expect progress within a certain amount of time? • might the timing of one thing depend on another (e.g. a survey before a decision)? • are there key dates to note from relevant decision makers (e.g. planning committee, project partners)? <p>Consider what is realistic to expect in terms of your group's available time to put into the project, especially if most people will be contributing time as volunteers.</p> <p>A large wall planner, simple month-by-month table or Gantt chart, can help to organise and keep track of tasks.</p>



Do you have an illustrator or graphic designer in your group? Why not make a visual representation of your project plan? It could be a poster, pdf or PowerPoint. A visual project plan can help to convey your project easily to others and help to keep a sense of playfulness.

People and roles

It's useful to consider early on who might be involved in the project, skills and expertise needed and roles people might take. It is essential to include families of children or young people with additional support needs in the plans and processes from the beginning, and to include the children themselves.

Steering group or working group: this group should have the commitment to see the project through to completion. You may wish to appoint a chair, co-chairs, and/or project coordinator. Members of this group might be given specific areas upon which to lead. All members of the group should be committed to the principles of access and inclusion.

One or two members could lead on issues such as: communications, design, participation, outreach, fundraising.

Ad hoc members/friends/supporters of the project: people with a general interest and willingness to help with specific tasks from time to time.

Local government officers and third sector organisations might include: officers for amenities, trees, biodiversity, physical activity, early learning and childcare, education and access, volunteer agencies, dementia, disability, families' projects.

Skills, expertise and attributes: while not all of the following are required, involving people with a variety of skills, expertise and attributes is going to be useful. You may well find many of them amongst people in the community with an interest in the project:

- architecture, design, arts and crafts
- planning, local history, social history
- play services and organisations (is there a play association, network or forum?)
- access (dementia-friendly, physical access, sensory environment)
- horticulture, landscape design, landscape gardening, arboriculture
- community, children and young peoples' participation and engagement, including children and young people with additional support needs
- communications, media
- health and wellbeing
- legal advice
- imagination, creativity, perseverance, problem-solving, positivity.

#tip As early as possible talk about your initial ideas to council officers, the planning department and Third Sector Interface (see information as the end of this section). Early conversations build relationships and you may glean information that will prove vital for example about ownership of land, other plans for your site, sources of funds and advice etc.



The proposed site

All sites have pros and cons, whether it's the possibility of flooding, to the presence of ancient trees or a location next to a busy road. Many characteristics have the potential to be simultaneously positive and negative. For example, a tree may be great for climbing but drop slippery leaves onto a path; a road might be good for access but poor for noise and safety; a steep slope may be a favourite for rolling down but difficult to make accessible.

Considerations for an inclusive and accessible play space include:

- existing natural and man-made features
e.g. trees, topography, streams, park buildings
- characteristics of the surrounding location
e.g. residential, parkland, conservation area, natural oversight from neighbours etc.
- accessibility of the site e.g. how easy it is to reach, whether it can be seen
- existing patterns of use e.g. play, other user groups, anti-social behaviour etc.
- weather and seasonal conditions e.g. does it flood? Is it a suntrap or a wind tunnel?
- approach e.g. public transport connections, nearby pavements which are even and have dropped kerbs where needed, car park or bays including accessible parking bays
- accessible entrances and exits, the possibility of controlled vehicle access to the site
- amenities e.g. shelter, seating, toilets on or nearby the site, Changing Places toilets (*see p44*).
- circulation e.g. sufficient space to enable accessible paths through the play space and to play features.

Speak to planners and the local authority about ownership, access rights and legal responsibilities as early as possible. You will need to discuss things like:

- who actually owns the land?
- the pros and cons of options such as: ownership being transferred to your group; a long lease; ownership remaining with the local authority
- will the local authority agree to maintain the site after you have developed it?
- who will operate the site and be responsible for maintenance, repairs, inspections and health and safety?
- are there any historic conditions or requirements for permissions?
- is there anyone with a connection to the location you should speak to out of courtesy?

If you will own or lease the land you will be considered the operator of the playground. This will bring additional responsibilities for your group and may affect how you should be constituted.

Independent legal advice is always recommended before entering into agreements.

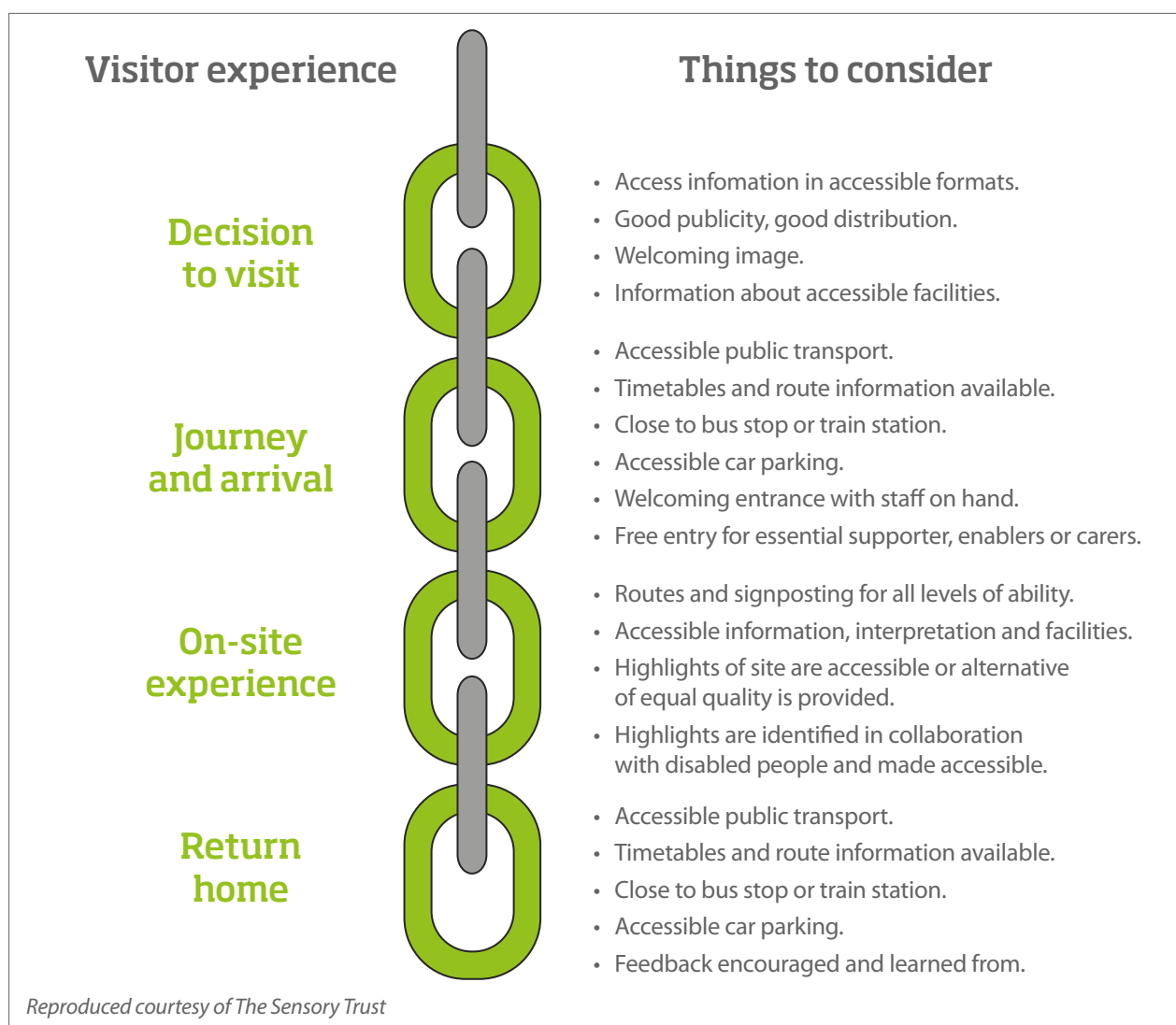
#tip Advice about trees can be obtained from the local authority. The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) is the professional body for foresters and arboriculturists in the UK. <https://www.charteredforesters.org>



The Access Chain

As well as the characteristics of the specific site, a wider context is relevant to an accessible and inclusive experience. Access is a chain of events that begins with the decision to visit and ends with the visitor's safe return home. For instance, a new inclusive play space may fail to attract more families with a disabled child if there is no accessible car parking nearby, and if it has not been promoted in a way that lets them know what they will find there.

Use the Access Chain to check that there aren't gaps in your plan. If you do identify a gap, it's likely that there will be other people or organisations who can assist with advice or support. For example, there might be a gap in promoting the new inclusive features to families with disabled children; partner organisations could help to share your information directly with the families they work with.



In brief:

- remember that a visit begins and ends at home
- think links – think about access issues at every stage of a visitor's experience
- remember why-to-come (site highlights) as well as how-to-come (practical access information)
- ensure that the information you provide is available in a variety of formats for differing needs
- make sure that you use plain English for all written information.

#tip Think links. Failing to provide for every link in the visitor experience can mean that the visit may end with the visitor feeling frustrated, or the visit may simply not happen.

Consultation and engagement

Consultation and engagement are likely to be critical factors in the success of your project. Good processes can have many long-term benefits such as:

- a design that better fits the needs of the end users of the space
- a more inclusive, accessible and play-filled space
- creating interesting challenges to inspire the designer or landscape architect
- building a stronger sense of ownership and stewardship in the local community
- opening opportunities for donations and support.

Every idea to emerge doesn't have to be acted upon – it may not be suitable or affordable – however it's often possible to find common threads. These could be a desire for a rich sensory environment, or an area to relax quietly, or a local connection or historical event which suggests a theme.

A skilled designer will listen to and draw on these to create a design that meets aspirations (and standards) in a way that is suitable for the location and manageable longer term.

Consultation and engagement activities require a plan.

What do you need to find out?

- What are the hopes and aspirations for the play space?
- What ideas do people have for the design?
- What atmosphere and general character would people like the space to have? (For example, a sense of adventure, relaxation)
- What do children and young people want to be able to do/experience? (For example, thrills and challenges, earth, fire and water, a place to hang out independently)
- What do people need to make it a more inclusive and accessible space?
- What can children and young people tell you about this or others tell you on their behalf?
- Are there any concerns or objections to the changes you'd like to make?
- Local knowledge of the site – historical connections, social history, current use, their observations of seasonal changes?

Who can you find this out from?

Who else might want to be involved?

- Local community, neighbours and businesses, friends' groups.
- Disabled children and young people, schools, mainstream, inclusive and hubs.
- Families of children with additional support needs.
- Play organisations and services.
- People who currently use the space.
- People who don't but might if it was developed more inclusively.
- Disabled peoples' groups, organisations such as RNIB.
- Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups and community associations.

Ways to find out

- Surveys – simple free online tools (useful but not usually sufficient in themselves).
- Art /design activities for children and or adults.
- Site visits elsewhere to find features that might work for your design.
- Make lots of photocopies of a site plan and draw straight onto it.
- Design on the site with loose parts to mark possible routes and features.
- Have a stall during a play day where people can come to talk.
- Display plans and provide ways to give feedback.
- Design charrette – an urban planning technique for consulting with stakeholders and involving them in the physical design or planning of the community, examples of which can be found online.
- Go out and talk to people, for example at a school, nursing home, unit, short break centre.
- Activities open to the public to drop in.
- Use of pictograms and symbols.
- Sensory mapping.



This isn't the moment to reach for the equipment catalogues. It's best to think creatively and broadly about the kinds of experiences you hope the space will offer. You might hear from the children that they love playing on a beach – so how can we design in elements that give a similar experience to a rocky shore line, sand and water? Or the children talk about creating a wilderness – then you can think about the design elements that will give a sense of wildness, surprise and adventure.

Useful tools

Getting it Right for Play: A toolkit to assess and improve local play opportunities is for all those interested in evaluating and improving local outdoor play opportunities and experiences for children and young people in Scotland. It shows how to use four tools to collect and analyse sufficient information to measure against eight indicators. Together these give a comprehensive picture of local outdoor play spaces and opportunities, providing the information for the Local Authority Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Download at: <http://www.playscotland.org>

The Place Standard tool is a way of assessing places. The downloadable tool is designed to be used whether the place is well-established, undergoing change, or is still being planned. It provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place. It allows you to think about the physical elements of a place (for example its buildings, spaces, and transport links) as well as the social aspects (for example whether people feel they have a say in decision making).

Download at: <https://placestandard.scot>

Pac-a-Map, developed by East Lothian Play Association, is a simple resource which aims to open up conversations about experiences of play and play spaces. Pac-a-Map gathers information which can be used to inform priorities and future projects and highlight issues surrounding play such as accessibility and inclusion. It is an engaging resource for reminiscence activities and for conversations between older people and younger ones. Pac-a-Map is based on the idea of local knowledge contributing to a stronger voice for play.

Download at: <http://elpa.org.uk/pac-a-map>

National Standards for Community Engagement
www.voicescotland.org.uk



Developing a design brief

What is a design brief?

A design brief is a written and/or visual explanation, given to a designer, which outlines the aims, objectives, aspirations and milestones of a design project.

Why is it important?

The design brief ensures that important design issues are considered and questioned **before** the designer starts work. A design brief:

- helps develop clear understanding between the client and designer – it acts as a guide
- serves as an essential point of reference for everyone involved – you can go back to it to check what was originally said/agreed
- can be used during the creation process to keep the project on track and on budget
- can also be revised as the project evolves – it may need adjustment
- can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a design after it has been produced
- can generate interest, support and funding.

What does a design brief include?

There isn't a set format for a design brief but there are common elements. These can all be informed by consultation and engagement activities.

Background	What is the background of the project? Why is it being done?
Aspirations	Overall what are you hoping the design will achieve? Can you say this quite succinctly?
Who is the project for? How will they use it?	What do they already think about the project? Is there anything that should be avoided?
Objectives	What do you hope to achieve through the design?
The site	What details can you give? For example, Is it a new site or existing site to be refurbished? What is already there (sculptures, trees, walls)? Is there any local knowledge about the location that would be useful to know? (Floods in spring, is used for sledging in winter, great for tai chi, known for anti-social behaviour, etc.) <i>See p41</i>
Style and character	Do you already have ideas in mind about the character of the space you hope to achieve? E.g. natural? Relaxing? Exciting? Welcoming? Multipurpose?
'Would love to have' elements	Is there anything you definitely need or want to include or achieve? For what reason?
'Don't want' elements	Is there anything you definitely don't want/need? For what reason?
Timeline and milestones	Give any dates and timescales you already know e.g. any conditions of funding to be got out to tender/ be complete by a certain date?
Budget	How much can be spent to get this developed? Are there any conditions for the spend?
Additional opportunities and assets	Have you received offers of help, materials or support you could make use of? Local artists or craftspeople to involve?
Point of contact and approvals	Who needs to give the 'okay'? Is there a steering group etc.?



Information you have already gathered can be included, attached or referenced, for example:

- formal and informal consultations
- site plans including tree surveys etc. as relevant
- local development plans
- demographic information
- historical information about the site and local community.

See p47 for a completed example of a design brief.

Developing a communications plan

What is a communications plan?

A communications plan helps you identify what you need to say, who you need to say it to and the most effective way to say it. It will almost certainly need adjustment as you go along and can be revised or added to as the project evolves.

Why is it important?

The communications plan will help you to:

- ensure your communications are consistent – it will act as a guide
- work out the time and resources you should allocate to this aspect of the project
- be more efficient as you identify effective ways to reach different audiences
- be creative about opportunities to get your good news story out
- establish that the project aims to be accessible and inclusive from the start
- be proactive about how to manage any contentious issues you can anticipate
- generate interest, support and funding.

What does a communications plan include? Here are some common elements.

The purpose of the plan	<p>It's useful to make a simple statement as a reference and reminder, e.g.</p> <p><i>"This plan is to ensure we have reached as many of the park stakeholders as possible so that they:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand what is happening and why • are kept informed of progress and any variations to plans • aren't taken by surprise by unexpected changes to the site • know how to contact the steering group if they need to. <p><i>It will also help us to plan for best use of time and resources, allocate tasks, be creative and be prepared for most, if not all, eventualities!"</i></p>
The headline	<p>Can you sum up in a few words or a short sentence what you need to communicate? E.g.</p> <p><i>"New inclusive play space designed and built by the local community to open in 2018."</i></p>
Current situation	<p>Can you sum up in a few sentences or paragraphs the 'story' of your initiative? E.g.</p> <p><i>"A working group formed in 2016 to develop the existing play park at Catherine Street so that it is accessible and inclusive. The group is led by Parents Inclusion Network (PIN) and includes parents of disabled children and young people and partners from the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.</i></p> <p><i>"We hope that Catherine Street will be a welcoming place within the community to be enjoyed by children, young people and adults to play, relax and gather. It should be inclusive of children of all abilities and especially provide play opportunities that can be enjoyed by disabled children with their friends and families."</i></p>
Stakeholder analysis	<p>Who are all the people with whom you need to communicate? Your list may include officials and elected officers, the local community, neighbours, local organisations, children, teenagers, current users of the space, local/national media etc.</p>
Key messages – what do people need to know?	<p>You can make a list of short statements explaining what, where, when, why, and who. Consider your stakeholders – what are they likely to want to know? Can you anticipate the kinds of questions they might ask? The children might want to know about the kinds of play opportunities that are coming; the neighbours might want to know about the impact on parking and noise levels; the community might want to know if a treasured memorial will remain in place; the partner organisations might want to know how they can join the steering group.</p> <p>Number your key messages for ease of reference in the plan.</p>

<p>Communications channels</p> <p>NB: The way the communications plan is delivered should also be inclusive and accessible.</p>	<p>What is the most appropriate method to reach the different stakeholders? For example: a personal letter, newsletters (printed or email), flyers /leaflets, banners and posters, noticeboard, website, newspaper, radio, TV, Facebook page and ads, Instagram, Twitter, blogs, other organisations' media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use plain English • Consider dyslexia-friendly fonts: see the East Lothian Play Association website for an example • Design your standard information using information access guidelines. You should be prepared to offer other formats such as large print but following the guidelines will help to minimise such requests. <p>See: www.plainenglish.co.uk www.saifscotland.org.uk</p>											
<p>Create a communication matrix to match stakeholders and channels of communication. An example is shown here.</p>		Personal contact	Notice board	Letter/ newsletter	Social media	Media Release						
Neighbours and local community	●	●	●	●								
Partner organisations	●		●	●								
Children and families	●	●		●								
Teenagers	●	●										
Local MP		●										
Wider community			●	●								
Editor of local paper	●					●						
<p>Allocate tasks and decide on timelines</p>	<p>If you now put the elements above together you have the makings of a communications plan: stakeholder, key messages, channels of communication, who is responsible and when do they need to do it. Again, you can do all of this in a table:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="419 1272 1418 1406"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="419 1272 555 1406">Audience</th> <th data-bbox="555 1272 715 1406">What they need to know</th> <th data-bbox="715 1272 943 1406">Key communications messages</th> <th data-bbox="943 1272 1102 1406">Most appropriate channels</th> <th data-bbox="1102 1272 1278 1406">Person responsible</th> <th data-bbox="1278 1272 1418 1406">To be done by when</th> </tr> </thead> </table>						Audience	What they need to know	Key communications messages	Most appropriate channels	Person responsible	To be done by when
Audience	What they need to know	Key communications messages	Most appropriate channels	Person responsible	To be done by when							
<p>Keep track and assess impact</p>	<p>It will certainly be useful to tick off actions as they are started and completed. Why not also collect evidence of the effectiveness of your plan, for example, how many people came to your public meetings? How many were new faces? How many Facebook followers have you gathered? How are our social media accounts performing?</p>											

- #tip** Are you anticipating any negative reactions or concerns? For example, if unhealthy trees are to be felled, parking spaces lost or the use of funds is controversial, your good news story could turn into bad news. In the age of social media, campaigners may emerge who may not even be in your local community. If you do anticipate issues such as these, the best approach is often the direct one – make personal contact with those most likely to be affected and provide clear information. Open the discussion with them first with rather than let them hear about it via the media.
- #tip** If photos are included in information, some photos should include disabled children and young people in order to promote a positive, welcoming image from the start. Remember to obtain permission from the child and their parent or carer before use.

See p52 for a completed example of a communications plan.

Developing a fundraising plan

What is a fundraising plan?

A fundraising plan helps you work out how you will reach your fundraising target and how to use your energies most effectively.

Why is it important?

The fundraising plan will help you to:

- set targets and work out the route towards them
- work out how much time and resources should be allocated to this aspect of the project
- be more efficient as you use your energies at the right time for the right approach
- be creative and have fun
- give people a way to be involved
- build a sense of community spirit around the project
- keep the project on track and protect it from shocks
- generate interest, support and the required money in the bank.

What does a fundraising plan include? Here are some common elements.

Current money in the bank	How much do you have now, where did it come from and are there any restrictions attached (e.g. must be used for a specific purpose or by a specific date?)
Targets	<p>How much will you need to achieve your goals? Break down all the elements of your project into categories to work out what is required. Remember to include items such as project management, meeting costs, volunteers' expenses and insurance as well as the professional fees and the cost of play resources. Write down everything and put a cost against it. Be realistic and check out up-to-date costs where possible rather than guessing.</p> <p>Remember that VAT is not usually shown in suppliers' catalogue prices and you may have to budget for this if you cannot claim VAT back.</p> <p>Make sure you allocate some budget contingency to cover any unexpected costs.</p>
Phased targets	<p>The fundraising plan might be broken into phases, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• phase one, years 1-2, the costs associated with making the site accessible, developing the main play area, holding a large opening ceremony• phase two, years 3-4, review of the site, addition of new features or additional play opportunities, repair and renewal• and so on. <p>You may also identify which are essential costs and which might be detailed as targets for things people would like in the play area but can be added when funds allow.</p>
Case for support	<p>Linking to your communications plan, think about the story of the project and why a funder or individual donors might want to support the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• who is involved in the project• who will benefit• how will they benefit (how do you know and what do they say about it?)• why funds are needed• why donors should give.

Potential sources of funds	<p>It's highly likely that funds will come from a range of sources which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large national funders such as the National Lottery • grant-making trusts • corporate groups and businesses which have community or social responsibility arms • micro-grants such as those from local supermarkets, housing developers and associations • individual donors • fundraising activities such as raffles, dance nights, etc.
Research	<p>Save time and energy in the long run by doing some research on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what each funder will support • how to apply • what the deadlines are. <p>Many funders have FAQs on their website, most have clear instructions about how to apply and many are happy to take a phone call to discuss a project.</p> <p>Think about the various dimensions of your project that will appeal to different funders and match their criteria – e.g. play, nature/environment, inclusion, children's rights, health, art, community participation, intergenerational activity, geographic location.</p>
Timetable	<p>A timetable to keep track of applications and activities (an Excel sheet or simple Word document is fine) can accompany the plan. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential donor (e.g. Big Lottery) • what they will fund (e.g. capital, staff, equipment, volunteers) • amount that can be applied for • deadline or deadlines • how often applications can be made (e.g. if you apply and are successful/unsuccessful, when can you apply again?) <p>And for your records:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date application submitted • date to expect a response • result • any conditions, restrictions or special instructions • reporting requirements.
Additional opportunities and ideas	<p>Some support may be 'in kind', such as a legal firm providing free advice, a housing developer lending you builders and joiners, high school students doing surveys for your group, donations of skills or materials.</p> <p>Various fundraising schemes can attract support such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a wish list of play features (like a wedding list) that businesses or individuals can 'buy' for you by donating funds • offer the chance for donors' names to be on a plaque, on bricks in a wall, etc. • create a classic fundraising 'thermometer', prominently displayed showing the funds creeping up towards the target • do the same on your Facebook page/website • consider crowdfunding or online giving pages • most of all let people know that the project needs support and how to give.

See references at the end of this section for useful points of contact.

Section three references

Documents for section three and other useful reference points can be found at the following websites.

East Lothian Play Association www.elpa.org.uk

Plain English Campaign www.plainenglish.co.uk

Scottish Accessible Information Forum www.saifscotland.org.uk

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD

The Sensory Trust www.sensorytrust.org.uk

- The Access Chain
- Inclusive Play

Useful points of contact for section three

SCVO Funding Finder <http://www.scvo.org.uk/running-your-organisation/funding>

Search funders using SCVO's free online search engine. It can help you track down the funding needed from small grants to funding for big capital projects. To start searching for funding simply register or log in.

Big Lottery Scotland <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/scotland>

The National Lottery's good cause money is distributed to community groups and charitable projects. Investments are made through a range of funding programmes, from small grants programmes like Awards for All to large strategic programmes like Investing in Communities. A range of support is provided for projects, including a dedicated enquiries service, training for grant holders and workshops and events for groups making enquiries, applicants and grant holders.

Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) <https://www.oscr.org.uk/managing-a-charity/fundraising>

OSCR advises that when charities get fundraising right, it secures both funding and public goodwill. It's up to a charity's trustees to make sure that they – and any fundraisers working on their behalf – observe the legal requirements and, importantly, the kind of fundraising practices that will encourage the public's continued support. The website provides straightforward guidance on rules and regulations.

Third Sector Interface

TSIs provide support, learning and development opportunities for people and organisations through their programmes of work.

TSI organisations work across core strategic areas of:

- volunteering
- social enterprise
- sector support
- empowering and engaging local voluntary action.

These functions may be provided by a single organisation in a local authority area or through a partnership approach. The TSI in each local authority can be found at <http://www.vascotland.org>



Section Four: Accessible and Inclusive Design



Inclusive indicators

Freedom

- to move
- a sense of space
- to be yourselves
- from judgement
- to choose.

"Let's make play spaces open to exploring, journeying, hiding and seeking and open-ended adventures."

Variety

- places to retreat to when things are too busy
- open spaces
- different levels of height and difficulty.

"Open grass area, large natural areas for exploring, trees to climb, rocks or fallen trees to balance on, anywhere with trees and water, anywhere with things to climb, anywhere flat so she can use her scooter."

Social experience

- playing alongside other children and not in a separate space
- being able to access equipment in his wheelchair is important to his inclusion
- feeling secure
- being with other children.

"Playing alongside other children without having to communicate verbally with others."

Independence and access

- accessible toilet and changing facilities/ Changing Places toilet
- suitable equipment for older children with additional support needs
- paths and surfaces
- accessible seating and tables
- parking
- different types of play areas in a town or region, giving more choice.

"Most importantly, the independence to have a go at it themselves."

Sensory qualities

- things that spin, things you can touch, contrasting light and colour
- natural materials in play areas e.g. sand, planting, long grasses
- the elements – water, fire, wind, earth.

"Go wild. Natural is best."

Equipment and interaction

- adventurous and challenging play
- play workers / staff / volunteers
- shade and shelter.

"Love the idea of staff involvement to do things like den building."

This section was derived from responses to a survey for families and people caring for or working with children and young people with additional support needs. There were 116 responses from all over Scotland. The survey took place from July to October 2017.

Natural and sensory features

Natural features such as grassy mounds, planting, pebbles and water lend themselves to play. Designers and landscape architects often look for inspiration in beaches, woodlands and wild spaces where many qualities of play can be found – freedom, choice, ambiguity (there is no right or wrong way to play in the waves), fun, adventure, surprise, discovery. There is now a range of examples and guidance for natural play spaces to draw on. **(See references at the end of this section).**

Taking children with additional support needs into natural settings comes with incredible benefits. However, access to real natural settings is not always easy.

Natural environments

- provide an abundance of loose parts than can be manipulated, shaped and allow children to be creative, all of which is supportive of children being able to play freely
- encompass a wide variety of sensory qualities which change with the season, weather and time of day
- can be very supportive of inclusive opportunities
- may not look tidy or well-manicured – twigs, puddles and fallen leaves have their own play value
- can be better at offering enough lines of sight but still giving the child a feeling of privacy.

Play value can be hugely increased by greater attention to designing for the sensory environment – the approach can include both the bold and the subtly nuanced, introducing texture, contrast, intrigue and ‘invitations’ to play. Natural features can be used to develop many dimensions of the play space, for example:

- cosy corners and space to retreat to or have a break
- comfortable places to sit or perch
- space to be an onlooker (some children like to be near others but not play directly with them)
- settings to support shared activity such as sand and ‘loose parts’ play
- features to encourage play types such as role play, dramatic, fantasy and imaginative play.

Without detailing the appeal of different elements for children with different impairments or conditions, there are many reasons for paying attention to natural and sensory features from the start. These include:

- There is no ‘age-appropriate’ or right or wrong way to play with a leaf, stick or puddle, roll down a hill or climb a boulder – everyone creates their own experience and can approach it in their own way. A big child splashing in a puddle draws no more attention than a toddler.
- A well-designed play space can make physical access to nature easier than a wild or unmanaged space might and so add to the range of experiences available to children.
- Natural features tend to provide for the range of things children need from a play space – rest as well as excitement, privacy as well as social activities, calm as well as stimulation.
- The sensory environment is important to all children; some children are particularly sensitive to sensory qualities and for others they can be especially fascinating.
- A play space should feel comfortable and welcoming to parents and carers too, a place where they can enjoy spending time – soft landscaping, arbours, shade from trees or places to wander, are all conducive to an enjoyable visit.
- Natural features can be used to assist with finding your way and creating a sense of location – a boulder might be meeting point, for example.



The elements – water, earth, fire and air

John Muir, Scottish naturalist and explorer (1838-1914), said:

“The world is big and I want to have a good look at it before it gets dark.’ A play space designed with nature and the elements in mind is one way we can support children to have a ‘good look.’”

Water, earth, fire and air are the building blocks of life; natural elements with which children should have first-hand contact to experience their forms and properties. A play space can provide ways for children to make use of and interact with the world around them. Designs may include elements such as:

- pumps, streams, water courses, opportunities for damming, making bridges and stepping stones
- fountains, ponds, trickle away features
- areas that are deliberately left free to dig, allowed to get muddy
- height, platforms, views through trees into the sky, telescopes
- fire areas, barbecues, solar panels
- things that move in the wind such as spinners, flags and streamers.

Maintenance

Ongoing maintenance is critical to the success of play spaces including those with many natural features. There should be a straightforward way for users of the play space to report problems or make suggestions. Good record-keeping in relation to installation, inspections, repair and maintenance is also important. The design for the play space should also include a detailed regime for maintenance. Look for low tech and manageable maintenance requirements. (See references at the end of this section.)

“It is important to consider the innate curiosity and desire children have to explore and use natural materials to play and build with. We should not demystify everything but allow children the freedom to have their own imaginary worlds. When children play in natural playscapes with boulders, terrain, vegetation and water, it is their own imagination they use to be creative. In nature they are also challenged physically, mentally and socially, whilst they develop a relationship with nature.”

Helle Nebelong (Danish Landscape Architect and pioneer of the natural playground movement).

Some things to think about

- How will the play space appeal to the senses, including sight, hearing, touch, and smell?
- Will children and young people be able to explore colour, pattern, texture, sound?
- What might the experience of the space be like for children and young people with no vision or low vision? Or children who are particularly sensitive to senses?
- Are there things to explore through touch, that reflect light, have strong colours, patterns and contrast?
- Is there a mix of interesting textures, shapes, weight, flexibility and temperatures to touch?
- Do the ground level surfaces, paths and routes offer the possibility of sensory stimulation?
- Planting – will the planting encourage children to touch, smell, listen? Will it attract bugs, birds and butterflies?
- The sensory environment can have both positive and negative impacts. Noise levels, wind and confusing visual signals can be a barrier to play improved by interventions such as dampening traffic noise, wind breaks, creating quiet corners, etc. Have these been considered in your site or design?
- Have you (or your designer) considered sustainable sources and environmentally friendly materials?

Equipment

“Play has to do with imagination, dreaming, experimenting, creativity and social co-existence. All this should be allowed or encouraged by play equipment.”

“Play equipment is important and often justified, but play equipment is not an end in itself and its existence does not guarantee that play will take place.” (Beltzig, G. 2006)

It is scarcely possible to provide play opportunities that meet the requirements of all disabled and non-disabled children in one single playground. The best compromise can only be found as a result of co-operation with the people involved – it cannot be laid down in regulations or standards.

“All children do not need to access play spaces in the same way but they are fundamentally entitled to go out to play. Each child is different – not every piece of play equipment can be accessible to every child but access to the social experience of play is key.” (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003).

Adaptations for a particular impairment may be excellent for that particular user group but, considered in isolation, could produce a solution which presents an obstacle for others or has limited play value.

Whatever their ability, each child should have the chance to reach their full potential. This will not be achieved by looking for the lowest common denominator but by striving to offer each and every child a level of challenge that they can learn to manage and, through the fun of this, develop their skills and seek further challenges.

#tip **Bear in mind that children’s abilities will change – things that cannot be managed now may well be managed in the future.**

In 2013 the British Standards Institution published a European guide entitled *Playground equipment accessible for all children* which gives help on considering the needs of all children at the design stage. It recognises that there will always be conflicting needs of children with different abilities and the need to manage this effectively and creatively. **The priority, it says, needs to be inclusion and the encouragement of all children to come together through play in good quality play environments.**

If you are not able to access this guide yourself, your designer should be able to purchase it or have access. You could include it as a reference document in your design brief.

Equipment specifically for wheelchair users can seem attractive. Because of the technical barriers to be overcome in manufacturing these types of equipment, especially swings and carousels, they can be very expensive and care needs to be taken when making decisions and choices. First of all, they are not necessarily suitable for all wheelchair users. Secondly, because of their weight and dimensions, they may pose a risk of injury which may make them suitable only for supervised situations (in schools and centres, for example) or where access can be controlled. This can cause its own logistical challenges such as systems for unlocking equipment, managing keys etc.



General equipment considerations

Consider the different play functions:

balance | rotation | hanging | sliding | climbing | rocking | jumping | swinging | resting | sensory

Some things to look for:

- additional body support /hand grips/foot rests
- sufficient space to manoeuvre around equipment
- towers – upper areas might not be accessible to all but do also consider the play value in spaces underneath and creating sound /play connectivity between the levels
- ‘escape’ routes from complex structures – how will children and adult carers exit the structure?
- wider passing spaces on bridges and structures.

Some things to look at for specific equipment:

Swinging

- Larger seats with better body support – but be aware of increased impact.
- Nest swings allow for gentle swinging together but also for much more dynamic play.
- Mixing different types of swings in the same bay enables children of different abilities to play together (you don’t need to buy all your seats from the same supplier if you are looking for a wider choice).

Slides

- How to get on/off – longer runouts will allow children to come to rest on the slide – a gentle way to cope with forced motion.
- Change of surface at the top of the slide to alert users of the change to ‘forced movement’*.
- Can you see that the bottom of the slide is free for another user?

* ‘forced motion’ is motion that cannot be stopped once started, for example a swing, going down a slide, rolling down a bank, a zipwire or cableway.

Rocking

- More supportive seating and additional grips/footrests.
- Reduced rocking range for some users.

Nets

- Nets offer a variety of challenges.
- Low starting points with increasing challenge.
- Remember – it’s easier to get up than down – allow for carer access.
- Allow for resting points on the way (primates rest in the forks of tree branches!)

Cableways

- Always have these on the outer edge of the play area.
- Long forced movement is difficult to adapt.
- More supportive seats have high impact on others and users can’t stop by jumping off.

Resting

A successful play area will increase the length of stay of the users. Consider the comfort of the carers with adequate adapted seating and tables and some provision for shelter against the elements.

“Play takes place mostly in the head and most play equipment is only the catalyst, the stimulus and the starting point for play”.

(Beltzig, G. (2006) *Playing Together. Guidelines for the integration of children with impairments on playgrounds in Nuremberg*)



Surfacing

Surfaces in play areas can be of many types including grass, grit, shingle, sand, bark, wet-pour or rubber tiles. Surfaces chosen for different parts of the play space can add play value, making it look and feel more attractive as well as address some safety issues. The materials chosen for routes around the play space, room to manoeuvre, access to play features, surfaces to play on and in, are important elements of access and inclusion.

There are many factors, including cost, which should be considered when making choices about surfacing. *Design for Play* (see references at the end of this section) has excellent information detailing advantages and disadvantages of different types of surface. Case studies in *Design for Play* will also help you to visualise how different surfaces can be used in different spaces.

Some surfacing materials are referred to as ‘**safety surfacing**’ or ‘**impact absorbing surfacing**’ (IAS). Impact Absorbing Surfacing (IAS) is not required for all areas, only when fall heights are above certain measurements. As the cost of surfacing materials can eat up a significant part of your budget, first consider if it is necessary at all. For example, grass is a relatively well known and child-friendly material and could be used when falls heights are less than 1 metre and you don’t have issues with heavy wear and poor drainage.

If you do have to install IAS consider the play value as well as the safety issues. Depending on the predicted users of the area there is a choice between natural loose fill or synthetic materials. Natural materials such as play sand or bark have high play value and exposure to such materials may be valued in urban areas where they can be rare, whereas synthetic materials such as wet-pour have potential for wheeled play and high speed ball games.

Some of the best designed areas have a combination of bonded and natural surfaces.

Some things to consider about surfacing:

- Different surfaces suit different areas of activity, for example, loose-fill surfaces such as sand are good for tactile play and high in play value but not good for wheeled play where a different choice would be made.
- Choices of surfaces can help to create flexibility, choice and interest in an inclusive way.
- As well as moving across smooth, bumpy or crunchy surfaces, children may wish to lie, roll, sit or rest on ground level.
- Unfamiliarity with natural and loose-fill surfaces may cause people to be hesitant to accept them in a design, however their value to the overall scheme should be communicated by the designer, and any potential issues such as maintenance or safety addressed.
- Although safety surfacing is often equated with rubber and wet-pour, natural materials such as grass and sand are acceptable safety surfaces too for some purposes (the designer should know to check the relevant standards).

Other things to consider are:

- relative lifetime cost
- maintenance
- potential for damage
- environmental issues including disposal – natural v synthetics.

Industry standards on the safety aspects of surfacing are available in BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177.

The Sensory Trust has clear information about paths and routes, materials, gradients and ramps, steps and handrails in their *Inclusive design: outdoor access guidance*. (See Section four references.)

#tip

It can be useful to visit a few parks, playgrounds or public spaces and get a sense of what different surfaces do to the look, feel and accessibility of the space. What does it feel like to move over certain surfaces in a wheelchair or using mobility aids? What visual impact does it make to have a uniform surface or combinations of surfaces? Are the patterns created by paths pleasing to the eye and do they create a sense of movement? Do the surfaces provide any tactile signals?

Universal Design and Inclusive Design

You may want to ask designers or landscape architects you are thinking of working with about their approach to Universal Design and its application in play areas. Universal Design addresses the need to make society more universally accessible and usable to all.

Definition:

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. (<http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design>)

Universal Design is consistent with a Children's Rights approach. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) recommended investment in Universal Design in play and recreational facilities to promote inclusion and protect children with disabilities from discrimination.

It makes sense that any environment should be designed from the outset to meet the needs of all the people who wish to use it. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and enjoyable to use, everyone benefits. A play area will be used by many different children, adults, carers and other groups and their experience of the space should be considered early on.

The aim of Universal Design is to provide the same or equivalent experiences and activities, but it is accepted that these may have to be provided in different ways for different people. On a play area it's unlikely that all children will be able to use every feature in the same way (and they don't usually choose to) but overall children should be able to access a good play experience in a welcoming environment.

More information about Universal Design can be found at: **Centre for Excellence in Universal Design**
<http://universaldesign.ie>

These articles describe the application of the principles in play areas. <http://www.ncaonline.org/resources/articles/playground-universaldesign.shtml>

https://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/focus_playgrounds_of_inclusion.html

The principles of inclusive design

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) published and promoted the principles of inclusive design as they relate to the built environment. They make a user-friendly reference point. The principles are:

- inclusive – so everyone can use it (the built environment) safely, easily and with dignity
- responsive – taking account of what people say they need and want
- flexible – so different people can use it in different ways
- convenient – so everyone can use it without too much effort or separation
- accommodating for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity or circumstances
- welcoming – with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people
- realistic – offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs and recognising that one solution may not work for all.



Bespoke features

Communities often consider inviting artists/designers to make a bespoke piece of equipment or artwork tailored for their particular user group and/or to give the play space a unique character. This can be very successful, especially when it gives the space a special identity for young users. If it is a piece to be played with or on, you will need to consider whether it offers sufficient play value and complies with the relevant standards (see p39).

When using 'standard' equipment you have the advantage that items may well have tried-and-tested play value and most likely come with third party certification to fulfil safety requirements. Products or installations that are individually built do not necessarily come with this guarantee. Playground inspecting organisations can check whether items and installations meet some aspects of the British Standards but not all. Specifically excluded are the requirements for loading and structural integrity. This is particularly critical when dealing with high towers, single-masted equipment and those pieces taking dynamic loads. In such a case, you may have to employ a structural engineer to ensure that these points are covered. This can be expensive so be prepared to add the cost to your budget.

RoSPA Play Safety provides advice and information covering playground safety.

Working with an artist

Bringing an artist on board a project will bring expertise and value in several areas.

An artist will be able to work with communities and residents to tease out ideas, some of which can be very literal and some less tangible. Involving the community in a project is known to increase the feeling of ownership of a space and cut down on vandalism. Creative workshops can be a source for teaching new skills and bringing forth ideas in an informal environment. The outcomes could be drawings, sculptural, craft work or a piece of writing.

Quite often, common themes will emerge. It is in taking these ideas and making them into a working format that the artists come into their own. An artist will go beyond making a literal copy of something that is created in a workshop and should be able to synthesise all the ideas in a format for whatever medium they work in.

Ideally, the artist should be brought in right at the beginning of a project. It means that relationships are formed between the different bodies concerned. This makes it easier to resolve any problems which arise during the implementation stage. It also gives the artist a chance to understand and appreciate the more technical challenges of the site, budget constraints and timeframes involved. If the team involves a lot of technical / social work / council personnel an artist can give a different perspective. Lateral thinking skills are an advantage in tackling different issues.

Lastly, an artist can design and make completely bespoke pieces for a project, which will bring a sense of uniqueness and quality to the environment for which it is being designed. This could take many forms – a mosaic, unique railings and gates, sensory equipment, wood carvings, furniture or an interactive piece. Unique does not necessarily mean more expensive than an off-the-shelf product.

Commissioning an artist can be done in different ways, each with pros and cons:

- inviting an artist directly from a recommendation
- an open design competition from which one person is selected
- inviting two or three artists to submit concept ideas for a small fee with the successful artists getting the work.

Artists are professionals with degrees, skills and expertise and should be treated as such. They may be self-employed or work within a small firm or collective. The artist should be able to supply public liability insurance and would be expected to be in the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme if working with children or vulnerable adults. They should also have the ability to approach the project as part of a team and be able to liaise with any other professionals involved – e.g. landscape architect, structural engineer, planning department – and have an understanding of the timeframes involved and the necessity of adhering to deadlines while working as part of a bigger project.

Any design work should be paid for and a contribution made for travel expenses etc. The budget should be made very clear at the start. Ideally a brief would be drawn up for the artist to work to detailing expected outcomes, budget and timeframe. It should be made clear who is responsible for installing the work and whether there is a separate budget for that.

This article is courtesy of Elspeth Bennie, artist blacksmith.

Section four references

Documents for section four and additional useful reference points can be found at the following websites:

BSI British Standards

www.bsigroup.com

- *Playground equipment accessible for all children.*
BSI Standards Publication. PD CEN/TR 16467:2013
- BS EN 1176:2017 *Playground equipment and surfacing.*
General safety requirements and test methods
- BS EN 1177:2018 *Impact attenuating playground surfacing.*
Methods of test for determination of impact attenuation

Centre for Excellence in Universal Design

<http://universaldesign.ie>

Grounds for Learning

www.ltl.org.uk/scotland

Helle Nebelong

www.hellenebelong.com

Inclusive Design Hub

<http://inclusivedesign.scot>

Nancy Ovens Trust

<http://www.nancyovenstrust.org.uk>

- *Awards for Play: winners' stories*

Play Scotland

www.playscotland.org

- *Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces.* (2008) London: Play England.

Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG)

www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme

RoSPA Play Safety

www.rospa.com/play-safety

The Sensory Trust

<http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk>

- *Inclusive Play booklet*
- *Inclusive design: outdoor access guidance*

The National Archives

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/webarchive

- *Developing accessible play space, a good practice guide.*
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, (2003)
- *Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)*

Other

- Masiulanis, K. and Cummins, E. (eds.) (2017)
How to Grow a Playspace: development and design. Abingdon: Routledge



Section Five: Commissioning



Commissioning the play space

When it comes to the actual layout of the playground you will most likely need professional help, especially if it is your wish to heavily landscape the area. Landscape architects are the main profession involved in playground design but there are also some independent playground designers and most equipment suppliers offer a free design service. Bear in mind that equipment suppliers make their money mainly from the sale of their own equipment and that may restrict your choices. If you choose to go with a landscape architect or designer then you could expect to pay around 10% of the budget for them to design, specify the equipment and materials and supervise the installation.

Whoever you choose, they should provide references from previous similar jobs before they are engaged and should be held to the design brief. (See 'Developing a design brief' on p22 and the example on p47.

If your local authority will take over the running of the playground, they should be involved also at this **commissioning stage**, and in any case are likely to be able to provide advice and support. They will have useful information about underground services, drainage and the like and they will take into consideration issues like ease of maintenance etc. which they will later have to deal with. In addition, they will be able to help with any planning permissions that you may need to proceed.

At this stage, the brief should have resulted in a **detailed specification** which will form the basis for a contractor to be employed. How you employ a contractor will often depend on any conditions imposed by the funders. If the money is the local authority's, they will need to go through their normal tendering process which may include a select list, i.e. a limited number of pre-approved contractors for that type of work. If the money is coming from grant providers, they usually require that you get three quotes for the work. You may not have to go for the lowest quote but they may only grant up to this amount. If your group will choose the contractor, once again, you should thoroughly check credentials, ask for references of similar projects and perhaps visit other sites they have built.

The next stage is **project management**. This could be done by the local authority if they are directly involved, or by your designer or someone in your group if they have the appropriate skills. The role here is to see that the job is done to the specification and deal with any variations that may occur and, finally, sign the job off.

Normally this is not done until a post installation inspection has been carried out at a cost to the contractor by a registered playground inspector.

Remember to keep up your communications plan (p24) before and during the construction stage to keep people informed and maintain good relationships in the community.

It is normal to hold a retention of around 5% of the contract price for twelve months to deal with any snags that may arise.

Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 may apply to your project and any contractor should be aware of these. Contractors should be asked to provide **copies of guarantees** for the equipment and also provide a full set of **maintenance instructions**. This is particularly important in the case where your group will run the playground as you will have to plan for and record a maintenance and inspection regime. The inspection regime usually comprises:

- routine visual inspection
- operational inspection (every 1-3 months)
- annual main inspection (usually carried out by a registered playground inspector).

More details on these can be found in BS EN 1176.



Standards and legislation

This section is provided to give a brief overview. Always go back to the original documents and seek advice where necessary.

Accessible information

Accessible information is giving information in a way that is accessible to as many people as possible. To make information accessible you need to think about the language you use, and how you present it. Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF) has a variety of resources available for anyone who wants to make their information accessible. <http://www.saifscotland.org.uk>

BS EN 1176 and 1177

These are European Standards published by BSI. They are the technical rules for the safety, installation and operation of playground equipment (EN 1176) and impact attenuating surfacing (EN 1177) intended for public use.

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gave community bodies new rights and public sector authorities new duties.

Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM 2015) came into force in Great Britain on 6 April 2015. They set out what people involved in construction work need to do to protect themselves, and anyone the work affects, from harm. HSE has published Legal Series guidance that supports CDM 2015 and explains it in more detail.

Equality Act 2010

Legal obligations for employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to improve access for disabled people can be found in the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Equality Act brings together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. Combined, they make up an Act that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

The Act protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

Least Restrictive Access (LRA)

The principle of LRA requires that any work, whether planned improvement or ad hoc maintenance, should meet the highest standards of access possible for that work. If you cannot achieve the highest standards, because of factors such as funding, topography and so on, then you should choose the next highest standards, and the reason for this choice should be clearly documented.

Planning

You may need planning permission for your project. Always check with your planning authority.

Guidance can be found at:

<https://www.mygov.scot/planning-permission>



What about safety?

“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.”

(Play Safety Forum, 2002.)

Providing challenge for all children, including those with impairments, is important in good play environments. When developing an open access play space, the widest possible range of abilities needs to be considered, as it is vital to retain different levels of challenge for all.

During play, children are often driven by the challenge to do things that take them to their limits, which in turn leads to a better knowledge of themselves through experience. This challenge often corresponds to a sense of risk as there are chances for success or failure, even when the probability of an injury is minimal.

Playground injuries are of course a concern for both parents and providers. It is not possible to erase all potential risk from play when designing play spaces without eliminating the play value from which children benefit, but there must be freedom from unacceptable risk of life-threatening or permanently disabling injury.

Many, if not most, playground injuries can be prevented or reduced in severity through careful planning, design and maintenance of playgrounds and play equipment.

Some things to think about

- A proportionate approach should be taken to assessing risk and benefit in play (see below).
- Generally, playgrounds are safe places for children, especially if you compare them to roads or even at home.
- Most accidents on playgrounds relate to falls, either from equipment or on the same level.
- Operators of playgrounds have a duty of reasonable care to all prospective users.

“...there will be a risk of injury when children play as there is a risk of injury in life generally. We must not lose sight of the important developmental role of play for children in pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.”
(Health and Safety Executive in Play Safety Forum, 2002)

Local authorities, in the main, are the owners/operators of playgrounds and one way they try and meet their obligations is by ensuring that the equipment is approved as complying with the relevant British Standards (BS EN 1176/1177) for the safety of playground equipment and requirements for safety surfacing. These standards are not about preventing all

accidents from happening, as some are an inevitable consequence of children learning to deal with their own capabilities and challenge. They are primarily about preventing those accidents with a disabling or fatal consequence and secondly about lessening the impact of those unavoidable occasional mishaps.

In the event of legal claims or disputes, reference will be made to the Standards.

Although the Standards represent good practice in the event of an accident claim, their limitations should be recognised: mere compliance will not automatically create a safe playground. They are intended to be used intelligently (RoSPA Play Safety). Equally, following the Standards will not automatically create an accessible or inclusive play space.

If your group will be the operator of the play space you will need to take further advice about your obligations (for maintenance, insurance and duty of care) and how to meet them.

Risk benefit assessment

Since the 2013 publication of *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide*, the concept of balancing risks with benefits in a process of risk-benefit assessment has become recognised as an appropriate approach to risk management across play, leisure and education.

Children need and choose exciting places to play, which inevitably means managing situations that are inherently risky. *Managing Risk in Play Provision* recognises this and gives guidance to providers about how this can be reconciled with a natural desire for children's safety.

A Risk-Benefit Assessment Form was produced by the Play Safety Forum (2014) to support a balanced approach to risk management using the process of risk-benefit assessment (RBA). It is aimed at those involved in providing play opportunities in a range of contexts, including schools, early years services, out-of-school childcare settings, play areas, public parks, green spaces and playwork settings. The Risk-Benefit Assessment Form can be adapted to suit the provider's needs.

This form and other resources on risk management in play can be found at www.playscotland.org



Changing Places (toilets and changing facilities)

Appropriate toilet and changing facilities can make or break a trip to a play area – the difference between a short visit or the chance to relax and play enjoyably for much longer. For some families they are the deciding factor in a decision to visit a play area at all.

The scale and location of a play space development will be considerations in identifying what facilities are appropriate to provide on-site or nearby. It may not be realistic to provide Changing Places toilets in a small neighbourhood play space where most children will be close to home. On the other hand, in a larger destination playground they might be prioritised for funding. There are plenty of options to consider, including:

- arrange access to existing facilities nearby, in a leisure centre or library for example
- improve routes and paths to and from these facilities
- put funds towards upgrading existing facilities
- make arrangements to enable greater access to existing facilities
- provide information (facilities available, access, opening hours etc.) and signposts to the nearest facilities
- make the provision of toilets and changing facilities a specific target in your project plans.

In making accessible and inclusive play spaces the importance of toilet and changing facilities should not be underestimated.

Changing Places toilets

Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of everyone. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well people with other physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis, often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. These needs are met by Changing Places toilets.

Changing Places toilets are different to standard accessible toilets (or 'disabled toilets') and if possible should be provided in addition to accessible toilets.

The Changing Places Consortium is a group of organisations working to support the rights of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and/or other physical disabilities. The Consortium campaigns for Changing Places to be installed in all big public spaces so people can access their community.

“Changing places, changing lives. Sometimes you just need to change one thing to open up a world of possibility...”

“Changing places are a must. We often have to leave play areas as we’ve had an accident. There are only TWO toilets at our local park for every man, woman, child, baby and they are always flooded so nowhere at all to change a child with support needs”.

Changing Places toilets provide:

The right equipment:

- a height adjustable adult-sized changing bench
- a tracking hoist system, or mobile hoist if this is not possible.

Enough space:

- adequate space in the changing area for the disabled person and up to two carers
- a centrally placed toilet with room either side
- a screen or curtain to allow some privacy.

A safe and clean environment:

- wide tear-off paper roll to cover the bench
- a large waste bin for disposable pads
- a non-slip floor.

The Changing Places website provides comprehensive advice about installing a Changing Places toilet and has a map of existing facilities around the UK.



Grace's Sign

Grace's Sign was the idea of **Grace Warnock**, a young girl from East Lothian living with Crohn's disease. Grace wants those with an invisible disability or long-term health condition to be able to use accessible toilets without fear of comments from others.

The newly-created sign depicts a person using a wheelchair alongside a male and female with a heart icon on their chests. Beneath the icons is the description 'Accessible Toilet' which is displayed in both tactile lettering and braille.

The hearts are the visual to back up Grace's message that disability can be invisible, to have a heart and not judge what can't be seen.

Accessible toilets in public buildings such as the Scottish Parliament and Edinburgh Airport now display Grace's sign.

Information about companies supplying the sign can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/gracesign10>



Section Five references

Documents for section five and other useful reference points can be found at the following websites:

Architecture and Design Scotland

www.ads.org.uk

BSI British Standards

www.bsigroup.com

Changing Places

www.changing-places.org

Greenspace Scotland

<http://greenspacescotland.org.uk>

Health and Safety Executive

<http://www.hse.gov.uk>

- Children's Play and Leisure: Promoting a Balanced Approach (2012)

Play Scotland

www.playscotland.org

- Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide (2013)
- Risk-Benefit Assessment Form
- Asset Transfer under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015: A summary guide

Public Contracts Scotland

www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk

RoSPA Play Safety

www.rospa.com/play-safety

Scottish Accessible Information Forum

www.saifscotland.org.uk

Scottish Government:

Planning and architecture <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/planning-architecture/planning-guidance>

Appendices



Completed example of a Design brief:

courtesy of Catherine Street Playpark group



Design brief

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

Client: Catherine Street Play Park, Dumfries

Background

The impetus behind this project comes from a working group formed in 2016 hoping to develop the existing play park at Catherine Street so that it is accessible and inclusive. The working group is led by Parents Inclusion Network (PIN), has subgroups for Consultation and Park Design and includes parents of disabled children and young people and partners from the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.

The working group has carried out several activities including a neighbourhood consultation, a mini children and young people's consultation using participatory appraisal approaches during a park Play Day, and a design workshop for PIN children regarding the new fence and gates. Information from these activities is incorporated into this brief.

Aspirations

We would like Catherine Street Play Park to be **welcoming, inclusive and naturally playful**.

We hope that Catherine Street will be a welcoming place within the community to be enjoyed by children, young people and adults to play, relax and gather. It should be inclusive of children of all abilities and especially provide play opportunities that can be enjoyed by disabled children with their friends and families. The lime trees are an important feature of the site but also present some challenges to what we hope to achieve; we hope that the play park will feel naturally playful. We hope that users of the park will be able to move through the whole park and enjoy the sensory, natural space.

Who is the play space for? How will they use it?

Disabled children and young people and their friends and families should find the design accessible and inclusive, a place to play, relax and spend enjoyable time together.

Catherine Street Play Park is also used by many local people to sit, walk and enjoy the pocket of nature it provides in the heart of the community all year round.

A number of groups would like to be able to use it more, including:

- The local library across the street felt that increased use of the park could lead to more parents coming into the library with their children. Book Bug sessions and storytelling could happen in the park.
- Malory House Nursery in Catherine Street and Play Works Nursery in George Street would use the park more and for longer to encourage pre-school children's contact with nature and outdoor activities. Access to the outdoors is recognised as vital by the Care Inspectorate.
- Dumfries Academy secondary school is directly across the main road from the park with potential for use by pupils and staff for learning and community activities. The Academy is due to be refurbished and open as a primary and secondary school campus.
- The park is also used informally by other local groups, for example for tai chi, for youngsters as a place to socialise, older people etc., and we are keen that we find ways to make it inclusive of all these groups including those with dementia.
- Visitors to The Usual Place café adjacent to the park (see below).
- The Theatre Royal (Scotland's oldest working theatre), which recently reopened following a £2,000,000 refurbishment, is interested in developing a partnership so that the park can be used for outdoor performances.
- The group is also exploring the potential for partnerships with other organisations.

Design brief

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

The park is currently also used to walk dogs, however the wish has been expressed to make the park dog-free with the exception of assistance dogs.



The Usual Place café and Catherine Street Park.

Objectives

- To create a space which feels welcoming, inclusive and naturally playful.
- To ensure disabled children and young people can experience and participate in a range of play opportunities within the site both through careful choice of play equipment, sensory features and playful opportunities incorporated into the overall design.
- To include accessible and inclusive seating, gathering places and routes in and through the park.
- To include in the gathering spaces a space which acts as an informal performance space.
- To incorporate suitable areas of shade or shelter bearing in mind seasonal changes.
- To incorporate the existing trees sympathetically and creatively, and to enhance their contribution to the play value of the site (**see note below**).
- To accommodate a range of informal play, leisure, cultural and educational activities.
- To accommodate public activities such as Play Days, community play rangers and loose parts play when larger numbers of children and families would be on the site.

There is more information on these objectives in the notes below.

Some typical comments gathered as reference points:

“A place for families to come and enjoy meeting on a regular basis and make lifelong friends.”

“Accessible for all children to play together.”

“Calming area in the park where children can calm down. Sensory area to meet sensory needs.”

“Park benches and picnic tables. Beautiful aromatic flowers”.

The site

Catherine Street is a small established play park within a residential conservation area close to the town centre. It has a grassed surface, 35 trees and some existing play equipment which is maintained by the council. The play park shares a boundary wall with The Usual Place Community Café. The Usual Place is quickly becoming a well-used and valued resource by families who have a disabled child or small children because the building is wheelchair/buggy accessible and has a Changing Places toilet.

Catherine Street Play Park is enclosed by a boundary wall. It is currently underused by both the local community and by groups who would clearly benefit if changes were made to access, surfaces, seating, availability of toilets and play equipment to make it inclusive for all.

The site is often damp underfoot and drainage requires attention.

We understand that there may be older paths which have dropped below the surface and that these may be indicated by the grounds survey which will be completed soon and available on request.

The local library and Dumfries and Galloway Council archivist have information about the history of the park.

Design brief

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

The trees

The lime trees are the dominant feature of the site and give it great character and potential play value which we would like to enhance. The trees also present challenges due to being forest trees and so not naturally suitable for parks, being of the same age, because of the extensive roots, and limb and foliage drop. Removal of some trees would create more useable space and would also be beneficial to the health of the remaining trees. Removal of trees will require planning permission. The working group recognise this might be a sensitive issue and will ensure that a communication strategy is in place to present the issue positively. We would expect the design to address these issues and to consider how any felled trees might be re-used on the site or elsewhere.

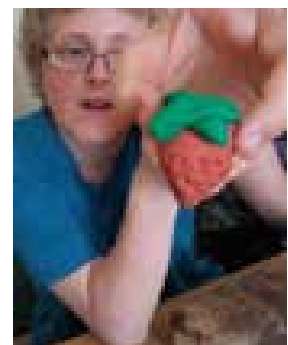
Attachments

- A tree survey undertaken by an independent arboriculturalist in November 2017. The recommendation is that 10 trees will have to be removed on Health and Safety grounds. The survey will be made available once the Forestry Commission have completed their consultation period.
- Site plan attached (gate locations are as shown, new path locations are indicative only);
- Grounds survey in progress.

Neighbours had concerns about the lack of parking, increased traffic, noise and the potential for anti-social behaviour. These concerns are being addressed through positive action by the working group and through the communications strategy. The play park is near the police station and the community police officer suggests there isn't currently any particular sign of antisocial activity but community police could monitor it relatively easily if any signs arose.

Additional feature

Elsbeth Bennie, artist blacksmith, was commissioned by The Usual Place to create railings and a gate between the café and the park and a new gate on the Catherine Street side. The fence will be installed after all other works on site have been completed to avoid damage.



© Elspeth Bennie, artist blacksmith

The design of the fence and gate has been developed with input from the children. It features flowerheads, leaves, small bugs for children to spot and trails for children to follow with their fingers and hands.

Design brief

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

Elements for inclusion

A general principle for the play park is that not every element needs to be accessible to every child or young person in the same way, but that every child or young person should be able to access the social experience of play and have choices about how they play. We wish the design to take note of affordances in play areas (how features of the play area support a range of behaviour and activity) and types of play. The play needs of children and young people who use wheelchairs, older and physically larger or heavier children and young people should be taken into account. In general, the design of the park should take an Intergenerational approach so that the environment encourages positive interactions and relationships between children, young people, adults and older people.

The sensory environment should be considered and fully integrated in the design through, for example, natural features, landscaping, equipment, structures, playable artwork, and imaginative use of off-the-shelf sensory play equipment. (E.g. scented plants alongside paths, long grasses creating nooks and crannies/shelter, visual changes throughout the seasons, light and shade, touchable textures, things that spin, sound /musical elements, sand, water). We are interested in how playing with earth, water, sand etc. might be incorporated into ideas for the design, taking advantage of the natural conditions of the site.

Paths and routes in and through the area should take account of access needs and be sympathetic to the environment and overall design. Paths and surfaces can themselves be playful and we would like children, including those using wheelchairs or other mobility aids, to have some choices between easier/smooth routes and more playful ones (e.g. bumpy, curvy, textured, puddle-y paths/routes, involve changes of level or perspective). These should be a choice, not the only route.

We are interested in making use of the old paths if these are identified. For movement in and through the park we need spaces where it is comfortable to turn and pass if using a wheelchair, or if a parent is pushing a buggy or double buggy. We expect that such spaces can be attractive and may have playful features. Path surfaces should link visually to the paved surface of The Usual Place.



Examples of a deliberately playful paths and routes

Design brief

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

Seating and gathering places are important on this site. They should ensure families and groups can sit together and eat together whether or not any of them use wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Seating and gathering places should take into account possibilities for storytelling and other informal activities and performance. Children also seek informal gathering spots such as dens, tunnels and shelters. Areas of shade or shelter, bearing in mind seasonal changes, should be incorporated into the overall design.

Play equipment should be selected and sited carefully to ensure it sits well within the site and contributes significantly to overall play value. The designer should be aware of the play needs of children and young people who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids and of older and physically bigger children, as well as younger children of pre-school age. We also wish for some of the play equipment to be robust enough for adults to play alongside children. Parents have expressed a preference for wooden structures.

Signage and communication: We are interested in thinking about playful signage and communication before and throughout the build process as well as play signage incorporated onto site e.g. about the importance of play, that children might be frightened by dogs so dogs should be kept out, why the lime trees don't have limes on them!

The maintenance regime should be indicated within the design options. The local authority will continue to maintain the site at current levels but will not be able to increase this. The working group may be able to find a way to increase care and maintenance of the site through employment or volunteers.

Additional amenities

Storage: We would like to consider options for locating secure storage for play equipment and loose parts on or adjacent to the site. (It is possible that a small piece of land between the park and The Usual Place may be an option.)

Bins: These should take into account that Dumfries has a problem with urban gulls.

Power supply: The designer should consider how power would be supplied/accessed for events, occasional winter lighting etc. It would be helpful to consider and cost three possibilities:

- laying cabling for power when ground works are being done with the park having a separate power supply
- hiring a generator when needed
- using the existing power supply from The Usual Place café but installing a separate meter.

In order to be considered for this project, submissions should include the following:

- concept for Catherine Street Play Park
- designs must meet current standards BSEN 1176 and 1177
- a risk benefit assessment should be included
- the design must be achievable in the available budget
- indication of fee to fully develop the design and technical specification, if selected
- indication of availability to make a presentation (may be made by Skype)
- indication of your role and examples from your experience with similar projects.

Please also provide an indication of fee to manage the project to completion – this is a separate piece of work and the working group would wish to discuss this with the selected designer.

Completed example of a Communications plan:

courtesy of Catherine Street Playpark group

Communications plan

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

The purpose of the plan

The Catherine Street Play Park communications plan will help us plan for and reach various groups of people with an interest in the development of the park.

We want to ensure they:

- understand what is happening and why
- are kept informed of progress and any variations to plans
- are aware of our approach to making the park as **welcoming, inclusive and naturally playful** as possible
- aren't taken by surprise by unexpected changes to the site
- know how to contact the steering group if they would like to.

It will also help us to plan for best use of time and resources, be creative, manage expectations, allocate and keep track of tasks.

The headline

"New inclusive play space designed and built by the local community to open in Catherine Street in 2018."

Current situation

A working group led by Parents Inclusion Network (PIN) formed in 2016 to develop the existing play park at Catherine Street so that it is accessible and inclusive. In February 2018 a new charity, Include Us, was established to take the project forward initially with four trustees (two with disabled children and two local residents including the PIN coordinator) with a strong desire to see the project through to conclusion.

Catherine Street is a small established play park within a residential conservation area close to the town centre. It has a grassed surface, 35 trees and some existing play equipment which is maintained by the council. The play park shares a boundary wall with The Usual Place Community Café. The Usual Place is quickly becoming a well-used and valued resource by families who have a disabled child or small children because the building is wheelchair/buggy accessible and has a Changing Places toilet.

The group was successful in gaining funds in the region of £225,000 from trusts and Dumfries and Galloway Council to redevelop the play park. The group hopes that Catherine Street will be a welcoming place within the community to be enjoyed by children, young people and adults to play, relax and gather. It should be inclusive of children of all abilities and especially provide play opportunities that can be enjoyed by disabled children with their friends and families.

The stakeholder analysis and key messages

Messages for everyone

The concept for Catherine Street is **“welcoming, inclusive and naturally playful.”**

The Catherine Street group is commissioning a unique design specifically for the site which will have physical, social and sensory play in mind.

The park is also used informally by other local groups, for example for tai chi, for youngsters as a place to socialise, older people, visitors to The Usual Place cafe etc. and the design aims to be inclusive of all these groups.

Not every element of the play space will be accessible to every child or young person in the same way, but every child or young person should be able to access the social experience of playing and have choices about how they play.

There is a Changing Places toilet in The Usual Place café available during café opening hours. Extending access at other times is being explored.

Additional disabled parking bays will be created next to the play area.

The site was selected for funding following consultation and engagement activities carried out by Dumfries and Galloway Council to maximise opportunities currently being undertaken by community and voluntary groups.

More details about plans as they are confirmed will be posted on the Catherine Street Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/inclusivepark> and on the noticeboard at The Usual Place café.

Stakeholders	What do they need to know?	Key messages
PIN families and other children and families with additional support needs	<p>Will the play park be accessible and inclusive in design?</p> <p>Are there suitable toilets?</p> <p>Will there be disabled parking?</p> <p>How can they feed in comments?</p>	<p>The concept for Catherine Street is “welcoming, inclusive and naturally playful.”</p> <p>The group is commissioning a unique design specifically for the site which will have physical, social and sensory play in mind.</p> <p>Not every element of the play space will be accessible to every child or young person in the same way, but every child or young person should be able to access the social experience of playing and have choices about how they play.</p> <p>There is a Changing Places toilet in The Usual Place Café available during café opening hours. Extending access at other times is being explored.</p> <p>Two additional disabled parking bays will be created next to the play area.</p>
Neighbours in the immediate streets around	<p>What changes will I see and when?</p> <p>Will there be any disruption when building work takes place?</p> <p>Will the new park attract antisocial behaviour?</p> <p>What will the effect be on parking?</p> <p>Is there any way I can be involved?</p>	<p>We anticipate the work will take approximately 6 weeks in the summer of 2018. There will be a certain amount of extra traffic on the site. The contractors should follow ‘considerate contractor’ guidelines.</p> <p>We will do all we can to keep residents informed. Specific details about construction plans as they are confirmed will be posted on the Catherine Street Facebook page and on the noticeboard at The Usual Place café.</p> <p>The community police officer has indicated that currently there isn’t any particular sign of antisocial activity. The community police are happy to monitor it if there are any signs of this changing.</p> <p>There are lots of ways to help the play park project, from simply keeping informed, to helping with creative and maintenance activities.</p> <p>You can contact us through Facebook or email.</p> <hr/> <p>We really appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you at the opening ceremony.</p>

<p>The Usual Place team</p>	<p>What changes will we see and when?</p> <p>Will there be any disruption when building work takes place?</p> <p>What will the effect be on parking?</p> <p>Will the new play park complement what we offer and vice versa?</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>It's of utmost importance to the Catherine Street Playpark group that we work together with you to minimise any disruption to café customers and the team.</p> <p>The Usual Place and the park together create a wonderful new inclusive public space in our community. We hope to continue to work together on shared activities and events for mutual benefit.</p>
<p>Current users of the play space – local families, local nurseries and childminders, tai chi group, dog walkers, visitors to The Usual Place café, local teenagers</p>	<p>Will we still be able to use the park when it is redesigned?</p> <p>What changes will I see and when?</p>	<p>We aim for the park to be welcoming and inclusive including seating and gathering places, accessible paths through the site and improved drainage so the ground will be less damp.</p> <p>Elsbeth Bennie, artist blacksmith, was commissioned by The Usual Place to create beautiful new railings and a gate between the café and the park and a new gate on the Catherine Street side.</p> <p>Dog walkers should bear in mind that many children are frightened by dogs running around and barking, so should be very considerate. Cleanliness and safety is of utmost importance and dogs should be kept completely away from the areas where children play. Your continued consideration in respecting children's play space is appreciated greatly.</p>
<p>Local organisations and groups – the library across the street, the high school directly opposite, local nurseries, after school care and childminders</p>	<p>We have ideas about how we could use the park in future – how can we share them?</p> <p>What changes will I see and when?</p> <p>Will there be any disruption when building work takes place?</p>	<p>Let's work together and share ideas – you can contact us through Facebook or email</p> <p>-----</p> <p>As above</p>
<p>People interested in the trees: potentially neighbours, community, Usual Place customers, media and general interest</p>	<p>Will there be any impact on the trees?</p>	<p>The lime trees are an important feature of the site and give it great character and potential play value which we would like to enhance. The trees also present challenges due to being forest trees and so not naturally suitable for parks, being of the same age, and because of the extensive roots, and limb and foliage drop.</p> <p>An independent tree survey undertaken by an independent arboriculturalist was undertaken in November 2017.</p> <p>On Health and Safety grounds the recommendation is that 10 trees will have to be removed. The Forestry Commission is now responsible for carrying out a consultation.</p> <p>Removal of some trees would be beneficial to the health of the remaining trees and also create more useable space which the community can enjoy and navigate more easily. Removal of trees will require planning permission.</p> <p>We hope to find a way to re-use any felled trees on the site (e.g. carved or sculpted), or elsewhere.</p>

<p>Local businesses</p>	<p>Will the new play park have an impact on visitor numbers to the area?</p> <p>Could we support the park in some way?</p> <p>Will there be any disruption when building work takes place?</p> <p>Can we have information to share with our customers?</p>	<p>We anticipate an increase in families visiting the area and will monitor that informally.</p> <p>Local business can support the park in different ways from sponsoring play activities, to providing practical assistance or making donations. Please contact us at</p>
<p>Police Scotland community officers – based a few streets away</p>	<p>Are there any specific concerns we could help to address?</p> <p>What do we need to know so that we can pass accurate info to the local community?</p>	<p>Messages for all.</p> <p>As above, info for neighbours and local community.</p> <p>Currently there aren't any signs of antisocial activity. We've indicated that you are happy to monitor it if there are any signs of that changing.</p>
<p>Council officers, local MP and councillors</p>	<p>Will the play park be accessible and inclusive in design?</p> <p>Are there suitable toilets?</p> <p>Will there be disabled parking?</p> <p>What do we need to know so that we can respond to any queries?</p>	<p>Dumfries and Galloway Council agreed at its meeting on 28 February 2017 to progress a £500k investment in the establishment of three inclusive play parks in Dumfries, Stranraer and Annan with the policy objective of improving the provision of play sites for children with special needs.</p> <p>The site was selected for funding following consultation and engagement activities by Dumfries and Galloway Council to maximise opportunities currently being undertaken by community and voluntary groups.</p> <p>Key reference document: Inclusive Play Report to Communities Committee, 5 September 2017.</p>
<p>Local media – newspaper and radio</p> <p>National media – newspapers and TV</p> <p>Organisations with an interest in play, inclusion, disability – Play Scotland, Inspiring Scotland, Nancy Ovens Trust, Capability, and others</p>	<p>What's going to be special about the new park?</p> <p>Why is play important?</p> <p>What difference will it make to local families and families with children with additional support needs?</p> <p>Who was behind the project and how was the funding raised?</p> <p>When will it open?</p>	<p>The concept for Catherine Street is “welcoming, inclusive and naturally playful.”</p> <p>The Catherine Street group is commissioning a unique design specifically for the site which will have physical, social and sensory play in mind.</p> <p>PIN families can tell their own personal stories – check in advance who is willing/available.</p> <p>Play is vital to children's health, wellbeing and happiness. It supports all areas of children's learning and development. Play is a right of all children including of course children with additional support needs.</p> <p>Details of actual opening date and opening ceremony/celebration. Details of Play Days can be given as an opportunity for pre-run stories. Contact details</p> <hr/> <p>Key reference document <i>Play Strategy for Scotland Our Vision</i> http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/06/5675</p>
<p>Others?</p>		

Note

We are interested in thinking about playful signage and communication before and throughout the build process as well as play signage incorporated onto site e.g. about the importance of play, that children might be frightened by dogs, why the lime trees don't have limes on them! Budgets for play signage will be incorporated in the design brief. Contractors will be expected to provide suitable signage during the build.

Three examples of **operating arrangements** between community groups and local authorities

Friends of Oban Community Playpark

SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) SC043720.

“The community park is in three zones for all ages and it is marine themed and interactive with inclusive play at its core. Children were consulted from the early stages of the park’s design. The delivery of this park is excellent testimony to how much the people of Oban value play for all.”
(Nancy Ovens Award for Play, 2017 Winner).

Facts and figures

- Friends of Oban Community Playpark works closely with Atlantis Community Leisure (the playpark is situated next to the leisure centre), Argyll and Bute Council (A&B Council), Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface and many others in the community.
- The playpark development happened in three stages.
- By 2017 phase three was opened, £334,000 had been raised and the project had won the 2016 SCVO Celebrating Communities Award and the 2017 Nancy Ovens Trust Play In The Community Award.

Organisation and communication

- The playpark team is organised into a committee with Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Grants Co-ordinator and committee members.
- The Facebook page has over 1500 friends. www.facebook.com/obancommunityplaypark
- There has been regular press coverage in the Oban Times and on Oban FM. Activities such as ‘name the boat’ (Salty Dog!) generated publicity and interest in the project, with prizes donated by local businesses.

Funds and resources raised from a mix of sources

- Funds received from trusts and grants ranged from £1,000 to £85,000.
- Local fundraising activities included birthday money gifted to the project, sponsored marathon runs, and primary school children’s activities. Volunteers and horticulture students have helped to work on the gardens.
- Local businesses have supported ‘in kind’ with, for example, gifts of signage, plants and materials.
- The Community Council extended their public liability insurance to cover garden volunteers.
- The group has a JustGiving page making it easy to donate to the project.

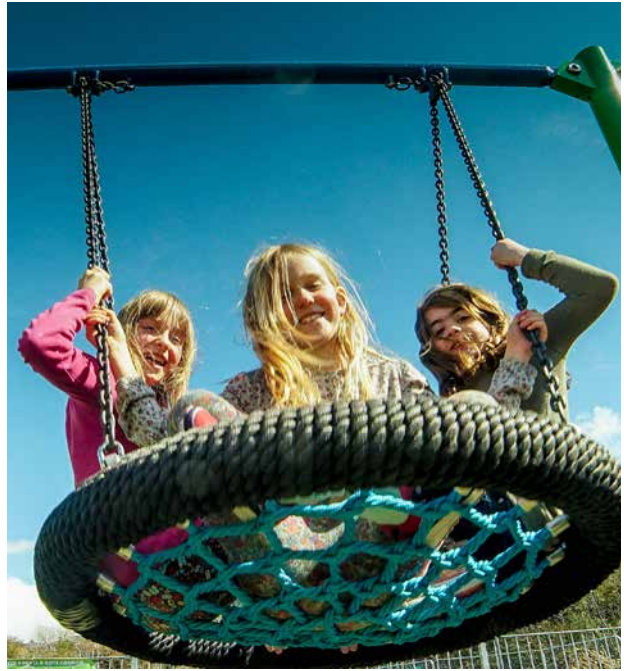
Partnership with the local authority

The Friends group works in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council, who help in the following ways:

- purchase play equipment at 0% VAT, saving £67,000 (the original £400,000 target included VAT)
- insure and maintain the playpark
- donated £13,000
- supporting the tender and procurement process with help from their professional, experienced legal and procurement teams.

The design of the playpark remained in the hands of the group, which organised extensive community consultation.

A&B Council, Atlantis Community Leisure and Oban Playpark Friends group have a legal partnership with shared responsibilities. A&B Council ‘own’ the equipment and are responsible for the insurance, safety inspections and litter picking. Atlantis provide additional litter picking and general oversight of the park. The Friends group is responsible for ensuring that the Council keep up their obligations and is establishing a working party for garden maintenance.



A lease in the process of agreement

"I'm involved, with other volunteers, in building a closed cycle circuit for people of all ages and abilities. At one Trustees meeting, we realised that despite our best endeavours to raise the money involved, none of the construction estimates we received included VAT. We searched high and low for advice but eventually came to the conclusion that in going through an asset transfer with the Council and building the circuit ourselves, we could incur VAT and would need to raise another £200,000 to pay that bill. Following detailed and very helpful discussions, it seemed we could deliver the project if we raised the funds and the Council undertook the procurement, oversaw the construction and then leased it back to our group over a long period of time.

The group will be responsible for the repair, maintenance and upkeep of the area for the duration of the lease (including the repair, maintenance and upkeep of all boundary walls, fencing, hedges and trees).

While not yet complete, our efforts don't now live under the burden of VAT. The lessons learned also include the benefit to be gained by having very early discussions with Council officials around a whole range of matters."

Selkirk Playpark Project

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) SC043550

“The Pringle Park Project is a fantastic example of the positive changes a community can make by getting actively involved in the future of their communal spaces.” (Nancy Ovens Award for Play, 2015 Winner)

Selkirk’s Pringle Park playpark was completely transformed thanks to a major redevelopment led by the local community, one hundred years after the former farmland site was first gifted to the local community. The project aimed to create a play area that is safe, stimulating and accessible to children of various ages and can also be used by both the local community and visitors as a meeting point.

Selkirk Playpark Project (SPP) won the maximum award from The Big Lottery’s Community Spaces Scotland fund to develop the site, making better use of this local space and improving the environment for all.

Arrangements with the local authority

SPP has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Scottish Borders Council (SBC) covering who is responsible for what. Once per year SPP, the local council, SBC, police and any other relevant parties meet to discuss the park, any issues which have arisen and how to resolve them. SBC carries out an independent inspection yearly to ensure the park meets safety standards.

Insurance is the responsibility of SPP, so they fundraise to ensure they can cover the cost of insurance each year.

Maintenance and repair

- Grass cutting is part of the MOU and is carried out weekly in the summer and as and when in the winter by SBC, which also performs fortnightly inspections of the park, emptying bins and checking the equipment.
- A weekly inspection is carried out by the local people through SPP and any issues are reported to the SPP secretary. These are logged and sent to SBC as a record.
- There is a Council telephone number for public use in case someone sees something that should be reported. Once reported, the Council either deals with it or contacts SPP.
- Different pieces of equipment are guaranteed for different lengths of time. SPP tries to keep a financial reserve in case they need to replace anything not covered by a current guarantee.
- SBC has advised that it will repair any small issues with the equipment, i.e. loose screws, knotted swings etc., and has allocated an annual budget of £500 for this. If any of the equipment is broken the SBC will remove it to make the park safe, however it is SPP’s responsibility to repair or replace equipment.
- SPP is responsible for replenishing or replacing the loose fill surfaces (bark and sand) as necessary.

The success of the playpark, with its imaginative design, demonstrates the support for the project in the local community and from Scottish Borders Council.

www.facebook.com/SelkirkPlayparkProject



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Photo credits

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Castle Tower School, Ballymena Front cover centre, p17 right, 23, 42 left, back cover left.

About the authors

Theresa Casey is a freelance consultant and author of many publications on play and children's rights. She works in Scotland and internationally on advocacy and actions for children's right to play. She has special interests in inclusion, children's rights and the environment. Theresa was President of the International Play Association: Promoting the Child's Right to Play (2008-17) and formerly Vice Chair of Scotland's Play Strategy Implementation Group.

Harry Harbottle works mainly in Scotland and Ireland on supporting organisations and groups to design and install playspaces based on children and their connection with the elements. He was a member of the working group that developed a European Standards guide to accessible playgrounds. He speaks internationally on the balance between play value and safety. He is currently Chair of Play Scotland.

About the Partners

The Nancy Ovens Trust was set up in memory of Nancy Ovens MBE to continue Nancy's inspiring work. Nancy passionately believed that children should be involved in designing their own play and every year the Nancy Ovens National Play Awards celebrate and promote Scotland's best play spaces and projects.

Play Scotland delivers the child's right to play in Scotland. Play Scotland is the national organisation for play, working to promote the importance of play for all children and young people and campaigning to create increased play opportunities, to ensure all children and young people #playeveryday

Inspiring Scotland strives for a Scotland without poverty or disadvantage. Inspiring Scotland works with people, their communities, charities and public bodies to develop solutions to some of the deepest social problems. Inspiring Scotland has worked in partnership with the Scottish Government successfully supporting the development and expansion of free play in disadvantaged communities across Scotland.

Disclaimer Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and validity of the information in this publication. However, standards, legislations and good practice are subject to change and the authors and partners accept no liability or responsibility for any errors or omissions. External links are provided as a service to users. Authors and partners do not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy or content of those sites.

“Play is a fundamental right for all children and young people. If all play spaces were designed with disabled children in mind then this would improve the emotional and physical wellbeing of parents, siblings and children. All children need the same thing from a play space – to be included.”

Libby Welsh, Parent Inclusion Network/ Catherine Street Playpark

This guide was produced by Inspiring Scotland, Play Scotland and the Nancy Ovens Trust in support of the Play Strategy for Scotland.

www.inspiringscotland.org.uk

www.playscotland.org

www.nancyovenstrust.org.uk



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