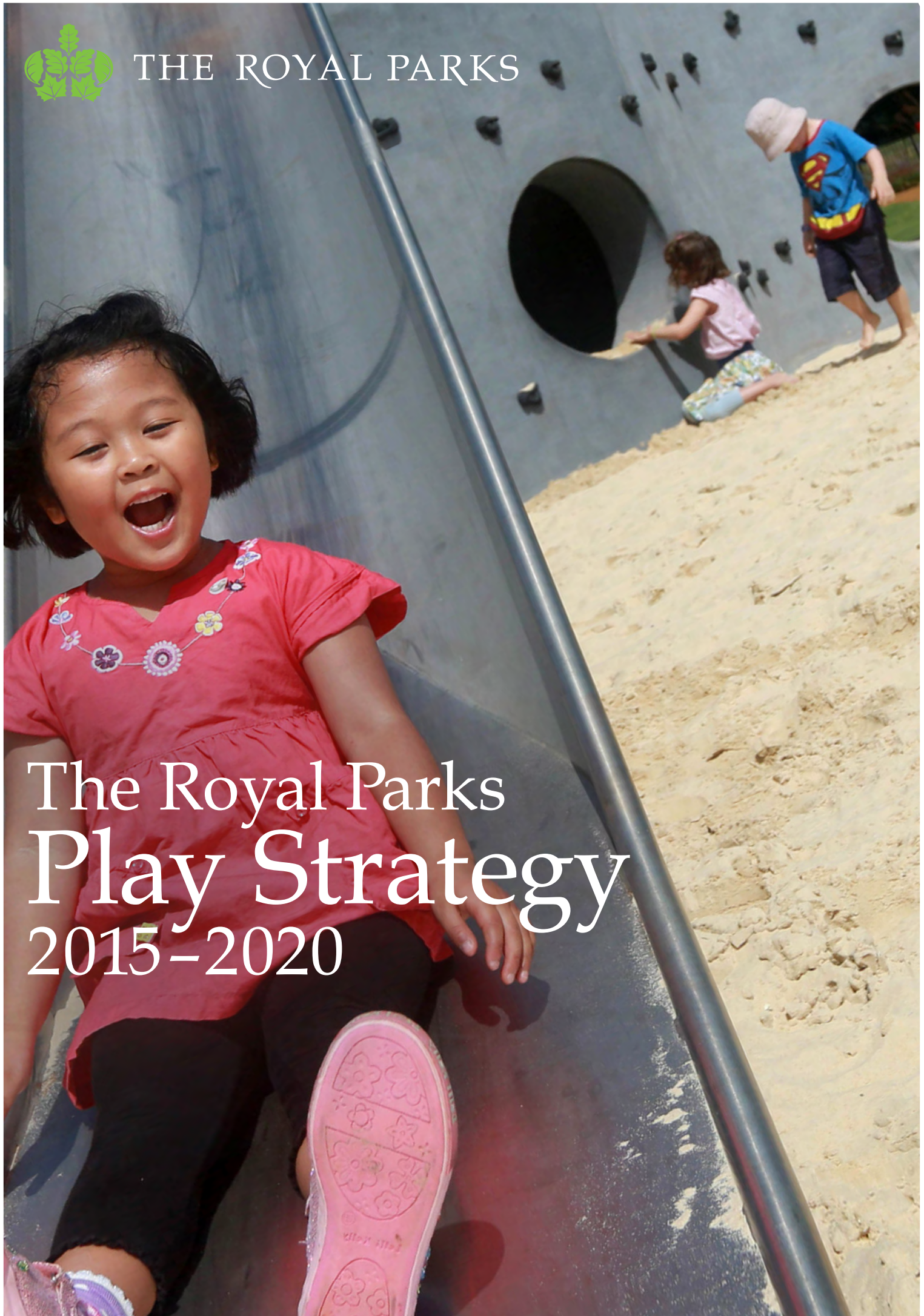




THE ROYAL PARKS

# The Royal Parks Play Strategy 2015-2020





This Play Strategy describes what The Royal Parks understand by play and how we will ensure that we provide a quality environment for play, young people's social interaction, and informal play for children.

We have prepared this play strategy in line with the guidance provided by Play England and The London Plan. The strategy provides the background to inform future play provision within the Parks and the steps needed to maintain and improve existing play environments.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

BSI	British Standards Institute
EA	Equality Act 2010
DCMS	Department for Culture Media and Sport
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
ECE	Education and Community Engagement
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
RCHME	Royal Commission on Historic Monuments in England
RoSPA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
TRP	The Royal Parks
TRP OCU	The Royal Parks Operational Command Unit (Metropolitan Police)

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# 1 Introduction

The Royal Parks are owned by The Queen in the right of the Crown and are managed by The Royal Parks. The Royal Parks Agency was established in 1993 as an executive agency of what is now the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) with delegated powers to manage and police the eight Royal Parks.

In summary it is; “to manage the Royal Parks effectively and efficiently; balancing the responsibility to conserve and enhance these unique environments with creative policies to encourage access and to increase opportunities for enjoyment, education, entertainment and healthy recreation.”

The purpose and objectives for The Royal Parks are set out in the management agreements with DCMS approved by the Minister.

Conserve and enhance sustainably, for the enjoyment of this and future generations, our world class natural and built historic environment and our biodiversity. Engage with our visitors, stakeholders and partner organisations and understand their views.

The Royal Parks Corporate Objectives, 2014

## OUR PLAYGROUNDS

**Hyde Park**  
Hyde Park Playground  
Bowls & Tennis Centre  
Play Area  
Lido children’s area

**The Regent’s Park**  
Gloucester Gate  
Hanover Gate  
Marylebone Green

**Primrose Hill**  
Primrose Hill Playground

**Victoria Tower Gardens**  
Horseferry Playground

**St James’s Park**  
St James’s Park Playground

**Richmond Park**  
Kingston Gate  
Petersham Gate

**Bushy Park**  
Bushy Park Playground

**Greenwich Park**  
Greenwich Park  
Playground

**Kensington Gardens**  
Buck Hill  
Diana, Princess of Wales,  
Memorial Playground

## OUR PLAYFUL SPACES

**Kensington Gardens**  
Buck Hill

**The Regent’s Park**  
The Hub  
Gloucester Green

# 2 Background



TRP manages eight Royal Parks each of which has its own distinct character. These differences are reflected in the variety of the different playgrounds and play facilities found within them.

The Royal Parks manage 14 formal playgrounds throughout the Estate and selectively creates and manages many playful spaces such as fallen logs. Some play areas such as The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Playground are hugely popular visitor attractions playgrounds, while others, such as Primrose Hill Playground, serve local communities. At the same time

they are also serving the children of visitors to London. The Royal Parks provide children with the space to run and play and opportunities to interact with nature. In common with other urban parks they are increasingly the only places available for children to enjoy exploratory play and contact with the natural environment.

The Parks make up approximately 5,000 acres of parkland within Greater London. The eight parks are found in five London Boroughs.

## NATIONAL POLICY

The development of this play strategy comes in the wake of a number of national and international initiatives and policies relating to children's play. The UK is a signatory of the United Nation Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 and the convention was incorporated into UK law in January 1990.

For many years the quality of Play provision in the UK lagged behind that of other comparable countries and many children's charities started lobbying for change.

*'Parties recognise 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.'*

*Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.'*

Article 31, United Nation Convention for the Rights of the Child, 1989

The following are instrumental in raising the profile of children's play

### National Children's Bureau (NCB)

An umbrella body for organisations working with children and young people in England & Northern Ireland.

### Play England

(formerly the Children's Play Council)

A body that promotes regular access to and opportunity for free, inclusive, local play provision and play space for children in England.

### KIDS

A charity that develops programs and approaches promoting play opportunities for disabled children.

### Playlink (formally the Playgrounds Association)

An independent play and informal leisure consultancy working in the areas of design, planning, policy, strategy, local engagement, fundraising and organisational development.

### Learning through Landscapes

A UK charity specializing in outdoor learning and play in education with twenty years experience of practical action and research.

### Play Safety Forum

An independent forum hosted by Play England as part of its work to research, develop and advocate effective policies and good practice for play provision.

## LONDON'S APPROACH TO PLAY

The London Plan sets out the Mayor of London's approach to play:

The Mayor and appropriate organisations should ensure that all children and young people have safe access to good quality, well-designed, secure and stimulating play and informal recreation provision, incorporating trees and greenery wherever possible.

Ch. 3 London's People – Policy 3.6  
Children and young people's play and informal recreation facilities.

Guidance is provided in the Mayor of London's – London Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) September 2012 'Shaping Neighbourhoods: Play and Informal Recreation.

The plan raises the importance of providing safe and stimulating play facilities for children's well being and future development as well as for preventing health problems such as obesity.

What makes a good quality place for play?

### Space

Location and accessibility

An environment that encourages healthy lifestyles

Inclusion

Diversity in lifetime neighbourhoods

Playable space in a child-friendly city

Access to nature

Safety and security

Management and maintenance

## THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S SPG PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE:

Public spaces should be designed and managed so as to offer real opportunities for recreation and socialising to a wide range of potential users.

Play space should be well connected to well-used pedestrian, cycling or bus routes. They should be accessible to all sections of the community.

Play spaces should enable children and young people throughout their whole lives to be physically active in travelling, in formal play and sport.

Play spaces and routes to play space are accessible to, and usable by disabled children and disabled parents.

Providers should identify the needs of children and their families and those of other users of the space by engaging with them at the earliest opportunity.

Public and communal spaces should be designed so they are multi functional and offer a range of leisure and recreation opportunities for users of all ages as well as being playable.

London children should have access to sites where they can experience nature as part of their everyday lives, and have engaging nature experiences in such a site, beginning in their early years. Wherever possible play spaces should incorporate trees and greenery.

Providers should promote a balanced approach to managing risk in play provision. The need for children to take risks should be clearly highlighted in play strategies and play strategy reviews and should set the framework for making judgements about play provision, risks and benefits for children.

Appropriate arrangements for the long term management, retention, access to and maintenance of any play space should be secured.

Audits should assess areas where play is intended to be at least one of the main functions of the space

For The Royal Parks the following policy documents are important references:

Guide to Preparing Play Strategies, Planning inclusive play spaces and opportunity for all London's children and young people.  
Mayor of London, Greater London Authority 2005

Time to Play. Encouraging greater play opportunities for children and young people  
DCMS, August 2006

Involving Young People in the Design and Care of Urban Spaces  
CABE Space & CABE Education, May 2004

Managing Risk in Play Provision:  
A Position Statement  
Play Safety Forum, 2002.

Managing Risk in Play Provision:  
Implementation Guide  
Play England Second Edition 2012.

Play Naturally: A Review of Children's Natural Play  
Stuart Lester and Martin Maudsley, Playwork Partnerships for Children's Play Council, August 2006

Sowing the Seeds: Reconnecting London's Children with Nature through Play  
London Sustainable Development Commission, 2011

KIDS – Inclusive Design: A guide to creating accessible play and childcare environments  
Landscape Institute Position Statement, 2008

Public Health and Landscape:  
Creating Healthy Places  
Landscape Institute Position Statement, 2013

Start Active Stay Active  
Department of Health, 2011

Planning for Play: Guidance on the Development and Implementation of a Local Play Strategy  
Children's Play Council NCB, 2006

Design for Play:  
A Guide to Creating Successful Play Spaces  
Play England, 2008

Best Play: What Play Provision Should do for Children  
NPFA/Playlink, 2000

## National Regional and Local Planning Policies

Playground development normally requires planning permission as the Parks are listed and in conservation areas. When designing play structures, areas and elements in the Royal Parks we have to be aware of the extensive planning designations that are applied to the Parks. National Planning Policies that are relevant to each park are found in The Royal Parks Landscape Management Plans.

## Royal Parks Policies and Strategies

There are several policies and strategies that sit alongside the Play Strategy at The Royal Parks and are considered when developing play provision or reviewing our current position.

## Landscape Design Guide

Sets out quality standards for landscape construction materials and design elements in the Parks such as benches, lighting columns and surfaces.

## Education and Community Engagement Strategy

Sets out policy, aims and objectives in relation to work with schools and community groups.

## Filming and Arts Strategy

Sets out policy guidance on the existing collection within the Parks, temporary installations, collaborations, activities and research.

## Major Events Strategy

Sets out how large events are managed.

## Volunteering Policy

Sets out how we engage with a very broad spectrum of volunteers.

# 3 Aims

The Royal Parks Play Strategy aims to increase the use of the Parks by children for imaginative, physical, and social play and learning.



# 4 Objectives

The Royal Parks has identified the following objectives to work towards. They are derived from Play England's guidance, current best practice and the Corporate Objectives.

1. To involve children and parents/carers in the improvements to provision of play facilities and to find ways to find out what facilities and features children value in each park.
2. To continue to develop inspiring and value for money play provision that respects the intrinsic nature of each of the Royal Parks.
3. To embed the concept of playable places across all our parks.
4. To promote accessible and inclusive play areas, creating sociable places that foster health and well being.
5. To inspire children and adults to respect and value natural landscapes as places to play, exercise, socialise, learn and ultimately preserve for the future.

# 5 Benefits

Attract grant and charitable donations to support the improvement of park facilities.

Maintain The Royal Parks' reputation for high standards and demonstrate organisational excellence.

Improve services to a diverse range of park users.



# 6 Principles

## WHAT DO WE DEFINE AS PLAY?

'Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child.'

'Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community.'

Best play: What Play Provision Should do for Children: Playlink, 2000

Play takes many forms and does not simply happen in designated playgrounds or play areas. One of the problems of a traditional approach to play is that of tightly prescribing what play activities can take place and where. (ie. swings, slides and roundabouts in a playground). With this approach there is little scope for social or imaginative play, children become bored easily and play is often reduced to racing around the equipment and playing tag.

Play can be divided into three main types; imaginative, physical and social.

**Imaginative play** is where a child takes objects and an environment and imagines it is something else, it is a key factor in healthy brain development.

**Physical play** is where graded challenges allow the child to understand risk, conquer fear and develop physical skills it is also key to developing coordination and confidence in the body.

**Social play** is where a child learns turn taking, looking after others, delayed gratification and many other skills essential to forming successful adults.

Good play design allows aspects of all three types of play to develop and furthermore allows multiple modes of use to allow problem solving and creativity on the part of the child.

Play takes many forms and does not simply happen in designated playgrounds or play areas.

## WHERE DOES PLAY TAKE PLACE?

The Royal Parks provide endless opportunities for play. Play does not take place only inside the confines of a designated and fenced play area. The whole of the park environment is a place for play from the duck feeding and leaf collecting of younger children via bug hunting or chasing and hiding games of older children to the physical challenge, display and informal socialising of younger teens.

Play can and should happen in a variety of places. As an example young children may enter the park with their parents at one gate and proceed to a popular destination such as a play area. On the way they might climb on a log; use steps or a grassy slope in a game of their own devising; use the mature trees in a game of hide and seek; experience natural materials and investigate wildlife.

In this way the final pressure on the more popular playgrounds will be reduced and benefit to the children's mental and physical development greatly increased.

# 7 Best Practice

Providing an enriched environment for children's play. The following criteria appear in Best Play: What Play Provision Should do for Children. Published by Playlink. The examples given under each heading have been adapted to reflect The Royal Parks approach to the range of play opportunities that the parks offer.

A varied and interesting environment.

EXAMPLES

Things at different levels, spaces of different sizes, places to hide, trees and bushes, open spaces, made things, slopes, dips, surfaces and textures: places to inspire mystery and imagination.

Challenge in relation to the physical environment.

EXAMPLES

Activities which test the limits of capabilities, rough and tumble space, sports and games space, chase.

Movement e.g. running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing.

EXAMPLES

Skateboarding, dance, swings, bike riding, juggling equipment, ladders, space to move.

Experiencing the natural elements – earth, water, air.

EXAMPLES

Soil, sand, stones, leaves and sticks, logs, digging, water, flying kites, wind and shelter.

Experiencing a range of emotions.

EXAMPLES

Opportunities to be powerful/powerless, scared/confident, like/disliked, in/out of control, brave/cowardly.

Thinking About Play

Not all of these activities can be provided at one time or in one place in the park, but thinking of play in this way ensures that art and education activities, activities focused around ecology and the environment, as well as formal pieces of play equipment are seen as part of a strategic approach to play.

Social interactions.

EXAMPLES

Being able to choose whether and when to play or hang out alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, compete and resolve conflicts. Being able to interact with individuals and groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and culture.

Exploring identity.

EXAMPLES

Dressing up, make-up, role play, performing, showing off, taking on different kinds of responsibility, trying out conforming and challenging behaviours.

Stimulation of the five senses.

EXAMPLES

Music making, places where shouting is fine, quiet places, different colours and shapes, dark and bright places, rotting leaves, scents, smells and flavours, eating outside, using and manipulating objects of different sizes and textures, rough and smooth, light and shade. wet and dry.

Manipulating natural and fabricated materials.

EXAMPLES

Materials for art, making and mending; building, mixing, making concoctions; access to bits and pieces of all kinds.



# ‘All children and young people should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day’

Dame Sally Davies, Chief medical Officer for England

(Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity from the four home counties' Chief Medical Officers)

## HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Regular participation in physical activity among children and young people is vital for healthy growth and development. London has the highest rates of childhood obesity in England, there is an urgent need to significantly increase the opportunities for our children to be active.

## THE CHILDREN

The need for play does not stop at an arbitrary age but the types of play activity changes as children develop into adulthood. It is generally accepted that there are four stages in the development of play activity. TRP considers these developing play interests and needs in the provision of play for children of different age groups.

### 0–3 years:

Play centres around the carer, simple pushed swings and roundabouts, manipulative materials like sand, natural elements, interaction with animals and birds.

### 3–7 years:

Play is more self directed mainly with adults in attendance, there is more imaginative use of loose materials, physical challenge, self powered swings, climbing, more complex relationship with animals, collecting things.

## PLAY VALUE

Play value is a term used to understand how many play activities (social, physical and imaginative) can be achieved from one object or piece of equipment. Some traditional play equipment may only be capable of being used one way (swings for instance). More ambiguous objects like sand can have multiple uses and be the starting point for many imaginative or social play activities. Even formally designed equipment may integrate much play value if designed well. A typical piece of multi-play equipment may have many physical activities integrated in a small space while still allowing imaginative or social play to develop.

### 7–12 years:

Play becomes highly varied, potentially unsupervised. Great desire for physical challenge, skill learning like bike riding, more social interacting and group games with made up rules. Most fenced play areas in The Royal Parks are limited to 12 years and under.

### 12+ years:

Great desire to master new skills and games and test against physical challenge, risk taking, parading and socialising.

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

We understand the need to provide play opportunities for children of all abilities. We aim to provide inclusive play opportunities that can be used by children with physical, mental and social challenges. We aim to ensure that play areas and equipment can be accessed by children with a range of abilities, and space is provided for carers and helpers to play alongside them. Some specific disabilities (particularly wheelchair bound) may require specially designed equipment but we will aim to devise or specify play equipment that appeals to a range of abilities.

We recognize that the The Royal Parks should seek to provide opportunities for playful, physical and social activities for children of all ages. We also acknowledge the need to provide play opportunities for children over 12 years old who are often excluded from formal play areas. We also know that teenagers, young people and adults use the Parks as their playground.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

There has been a revolution in the design of play equipment in the last couple of decades led by German and Scandinavian play equipment companies. Many modern play equipment designs are developed from the findings of child development science and can fulfil a key role in a playground design. Set piece items of equipment are expensive and simpler components should not be overlooked. Swings and sandpits are long term favourites and creative use of landforms, art elements and simple constructions from concrete, brick or timber can provide much play value at low cost. Fallen timber, logs, tunnels woven from willow or hazel, rocks and boulders, banks, hills, puddles and gullies; bamboo groves and dens in shrubs or under weeping willows are all low cost renewable features that can change and develop over time. Surfacing also should be considered; wet pour surfacing is often used due to ease of maintenance but it is costly, its colour fades fast and patch repairs are often unsatisfactory. The play value and lower cost of loose materials such as bark mulch, sand or gravel should be assessed. There are a number of reinforced grass matting products which give a more natural look. Natural grass under equipment has its merits and is more appropriate in many situations, worn grass is an indicator of a well loved play area.

‘Our School love your playground and so do other children. It was an honour to visit... it is probably the best playground ever’

Ryan, aged 9, Liverpool



## COLOUR

There has been a propensity to use primary colours in play equipment in the past. This stems from the mistaken notion that these are the colours of the nursery and children have a reduced understanding of colour. This is in fact wrong and children have exactly the same appreciation of colour as adults and can learn about colour from their environment.

Colour can and should be used as part of an overall colour scheme that gives unity and meaning to a design. Colour should be chosen carefully to integrate or animate designs with as much care as a building facade receives. Colour contrast is also considered for those with visual impairments.

## PLANTING

No matter how good a playground design is, it will be sterile and static without planting. Plants themselves not only offer seasonal change and screening but have play value in themselves. When carefully chosen they can provide colour, scents and smells, materials (nuts, berries, flowers and leaves), structure (living willow tunnels for instance) and inspiration for play (bamboos and 'jungle' plants).

Simple flowering meadow plants also enhance places to play. Ox eye daisies, burdock, grasses, wild barley and other wayside plants all have traditional uses for play in the UK and should be labelled as play plants to save confusion with 'do not pick the flowers' rules elsewhere in the Parks. Occasional trampling in these areas does not adversely effect the ecology and can be a visually stimulating part of play.

## RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Risk is inherent in life and the accurate assessment of physical risk is a key skill learnt in growing up. Children are drawn to risk and challenge but unfortunately cities are full of difficult to assess risks for children such as fast moving traffic on busy roads.

The park environment is an ideal place to create graded challenges so that children can learn at their own pace and provide opportunities to build physical coordination, balance and confidence in climbing skills. Much has been written about risk, risk benefit analysis and risk management. The Royal Parks has been at the forefront of adopting the emerging thinking in risk benefit assessment in play areas such as the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Playground. Risk and safety needs to be carefully considered but not to the detriment of play value and children's development opportunities.

Good places for play should include a degree of physical challenge and allow managed opportunities for children and young people to take risks. The risk of injury cannot be eliminated in any space and minor and easily healed injuries are part of every child's experience. A suitable and sufficient risk assessment strikes a balance between the risks and the benefits of risks.

In line with industry best practice TRP takes a rigorous approach to risk management which includes:

Policy framework

Risk-benefit assessment

Technical inspection set out in Section 25 'Playgrounds' TRP Health and Safety Manual – routine checking of play facilities for soundness, wear and tear, damage, maintenance and cleanliness.

Dynamic risk assessment in supervised play areas

Dogs are excluded from TRP playgrounds.

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

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Summary Statement Play Safety Forum

#### NATURAL PLAY

Natural play is a term used to describe play in natural environments and the use of more natural forms and materials in playgrounds such as trees and logs, rocks and sand, tunnels and landform. The advantage of natural materials is that the irregular features have more play value and they teach real world skills like rock hopping, balance and coordination and provide opportunities for children to assess naturally occurring risks. They also teach respect and appreciation for the wider natural world.

Many children in London do not have adequate access to natural places. One in seven children in London has not visited a green space in the last year. The report *Sowing the Seeds: Reconnecting London's Children with Nature*, explores how children can be reconnected with nature through play and the benefits that may be experienced as a result. Time in outdoor spaces improves concentration, boosts motor development, improves mood, and boosts physical activity. Childhood visits to natural places are linked to developing positive views of nature as an adult.

The report recommends:

effective children's participation

risk benefit assessment

hands-on, play orientated experiences and interventions,

better use of accessible green space forest schools and outdoor approaches to learning

# 8 Delivery

In order to achieve the objectives outlined in sections 3 and 4 the following delivery mechanisms have been identified.

#### OBJECTIVE 1

To involve children and parents/carers in the improvements to provision of play facilities and to find ways to find out what facilities and features children value in each park.

#### DELIVERY MECHANISM:

1. Carry out play audits and include parents/carers/maintenance staff/park management staff in the audit process by capturing their comments.
2. Include an element of local engagement in playground redesign.
3. Map the different ways children's and young people play in the parks by recording local knowledge and anecdotal evidence of where children play.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

To continue to develop an inspiring and value for money play provision that respects the intrinsic nature of each of the Royal Parks.

#### DELIVERY MECHANISM:

1. Seek to ensure playgrounds are refurbished on a rolling programme and where possible that adequate budgets are available to complete innovative and successful projects.
2. Develop a sense of place in the Royal Parks playgrounds by using designs and themes that respond to the surrounding landscape, history and ecology.
3. Employ experienced playground designers in the design of redevelopments or additional playgrounds and develop design briefs that give scope for creative use of natural materials and landform, timber, artworks, plants, trees and ecology in play provision.
4. Develop design standards for playground details that take into account the cost of maintenance (full life costs) and ownership.
5. Benchmark TRP playgrounds against playgrounds in other high quality London Parks and spaces or international exemplars.

### OBJECTIVE 3

To embed the concept of playable places across all our parks

#### DELIVERY MECHANISM:

1. Continue to inform our staff of best practice and current thinking through presentations such as at the staff conference and park managers meetings.
2. Devise projects with our staff and other organisations that integrates or expands the possibility of play across the wider park landscapes.
3. Ensure there are supervised and unsupervised places for free play
4. Ensure appropriate management of loose materials, vegetation, long grass and trees for free play. Give appropriate protection to highly ornamental or ecologically sensitive areas.
5. Engage with landscape maintenance staff and facilities management to ensure appropriate and sensitive management of areas used for play.

### OBJECTIVE 4

To promote accessible and inclusive play areas, creating sociable places that foster health and well being

#### DELIVERY MECHANISM:

1. Audit all the parks against a range of play activities and provision assessing accessibility, play value and inclusivity ensuring maximum benefits can be derived for children of all abilities.
2. Develop projects that improve provision and 'signposting' for those groups under represented.
3. Promote temporary playful outreach activities in the parks such as the tree house installation and circus skills when provided and funded by external organisations.
4. Promote and support play initiatives as a key to health and well being

### OBJECTIVE 5

To inspire children and adults to respect and value natural landscapes as places to play, exercise, socialise, learn and ultimately preserve for the future.

#### DELIVERY MECHANISM:

1. Develop events and activities that connect children and parents to the changing seasons and events that encourage and celebrate natural and free play outside of playgrounds.
2. Promote natural play principles and activities that engage with nature by observing, learning and understanding e.g. bird watching, wildlife quizzes, bark rubbings etc.
3. Make known behaviour codes and enforce them when appropriate, instruct staff, maintain where possible an adult presence at playgrounds.
4. Introduce more free play elements into existing playgrounds.

# 9 Ensuring Quality

1. Engage Landscape Architects and other professionals with recognised expertise in playground design.
2. Use project management systems, which include diversity assessments (such as Equality Impact Assessments) to ensure quality standards are set and measured against.
3. Encourage review and feedback throughout any improvement process and after any implementation.
4. Create a palette of suitable materials, equipment and furniture with standard details.
5. Continue to check, monitor and review play provision within the Parks to ensure the quality is kept high. Benchmark against playgrounds in London and international exemplars.
6. Continue to check and review maintenance standards – ensure maintenance regimes are fit for purpose and allow for innovative and engaging play.



# 10 Judging Success

Benchmark against the best of London Park playgrounds.

Gather feedback from stakeholders and visitors.

Annual Playground Audits with increasing targets.

Benchmark against International exemplars.

# 11 Targets

This strategy supports the ongoing programme of renovation and renewal of existing play areas. In the five years leading up to the start of this strategy TRP successfully outperformed targets to renovate five playgrounds and create three playable spaces by 2012.

### CURRENT POSITION

When the Diana, Princess of Wales, Memorial Playground was developed in 2000 in Kensington Gardens, The Royal Parks agreed to adopt emerging play thinking about encouraging risk taking in safe play environments.

In the last five years innovative and contemporary playgrounds have been installed at Marylebone Green in Regents Park, Victoria Tower Gardens, Greenwich Park and at South Carriage Drive in Hyde Park as well as upgrading of playgrounds in Bushy and Richmond Park. These complement playful spaces developed at Buckhill in Kensington Gardens, Gloucester Green and the Hub in Regents Park using natural materials providing play for children of all ages without fencing and safety surfacing. We have installed an exercise/ play area aimed at older people in Hyde Park.

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial playground was and continues to be immensely

popular and still stands out as an exemplar space. Due to its huge popularity it is the only playground in the Parks that has dedicated play leaders and a playground manager. Although few if any playgrounds of this scale have been attempted in public parks, the general standard of urban park playgrounds has significantly improved over the last decade.

Play in the Royal Parks is promoted and supported by the learning/ educational and outreach activities delivered by TRP's Community Engagement Team, as well as activities funded and delivered by The Royal Parks Foundation.

### PLAY AUDITS

The Royal Parks have developed a Play Audit system to engage park staff with the Play Strategy principles. All 14 playgrounds have been audited to assess their play value and make recommendations for improvement. The audits involve consultation with park visitors and park staff. The audits have been designed to be easy to undertake with or without any design or park management experience. The results have successfully identified areas for improvement and recommendations are used to implement improvements.

## THE FUTURE

With the continuing support of the Royal Parks Foundation, AEG, The London Marathon Trust and other Charitable Trusts it is anticipated that The Royal Parks will be able to continue to deliver playground improvements throughout the next five years. Further improvements at Victoria Tower Gardens and Greenwich Park, Primrose Hill Trim Trail and Gloucester Gate in Regents Park are currently in development.

## TARGETS

Review the Play Strategy every five years.

Seek external funding for the Implementation of two playground upgrades annually.

Seek to develop one natural playable space in every Royal Park from 2014–2019.

Revisit play audits on an 3 year basis – implement improvement targets from play audits, seeking to increase play value scores in all playgrounds

Engage the landscape maintenance and facilities management staff in the Play Strategy delivery by providing a workshop and associated learning activities each year from 2014–2016.

Consult with playground users, partner organisations, and key stakeholders throughout the design and development of playground improvement projects.

## REFERENCES

RBK&C Play Strategy 2006–2009

Westminster City Council Play Strategy 2007–2010

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Play Strategy Strategy Review 2011–2014

Greenwich Council Play Strategy 2007–2012

Camden Council Play Strategy 2007–2012

[www.projectwildthing](http://www.projectwildthing)  
[www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)  
[www.kids.org.uk](http://www.kids.org.uk)  
[www.forestschoools.com](http://www.forestschoools.com)  
[www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)

‘The climbing structure was installed as one of our first designed ‘hplayful spaces’ and has seen terrific use. I am sure it will continue to be a key attraction over the years to come’

Nick Biddle, Park Manager



## FEEDBACK

If you have comments or would like to feedback on this strategy please contact:

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[royalparks.org.uk](http://royalparks.org.uk)

A large, leafy tree stands on the right side of a grassy field. In the background, a group of children and adults are walking along a path on a gentle slope. The scene is bright and sunny, with long shadows cast across the grass.

'Play can be fun or serious.  
Through play children explore  
social, material and imaginary  
worlds and their relationship  
with them, elaborating all  
the while a flexible range of  
responses to the challenges  
they encounter. By playing,  
children learn and develop  
as individuals, and as  
members of the community.'

Best play: What Play Provision  
Should do for Children: Playlink, 2000