

Supplementary Planning Guidance Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation



March 2008

Supplementary Planning Guidance
Providing for Children and Young People's Play
and Informal Recreation

Copyright

**Greater London Authority
March 2008**

Published by
**Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA**
enquiries **020 7983 4100**
minicom **020 7983 4458**
www.london.gov.uk

ISBN **978 1 84781 156 1**

Cover photograph © Michael Franke

Copies of this document are available from www.london.gov.uk or by calling 020 7983 4100.

Acknowledgements

The GLA acknowledges the work of and extends thanks to the London Development Agency for jointly funding this project, Joanna Chambers and Heather Topel from EDAW and Tim Gill for drafting and preparing this Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance. In addition, thanks are extended to all members of the External Challenge Group and representatives of the London Boroughs who provided valuable input, expertise and support for the project.

Preparation of the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has involved extensive consultation with London Boroughs and other key stakeholders involved in play provision. The GLA is grateful for the time and input of the Boroughs and all participants in the Challenge Group meetings that have contributed to the development of this guidance.

Contents

1	Introduction	9
2	Delivering a child and young person friendly environment	17
3	Raising aspirations and expectations for play	26
4	Applying the benchmark standards	40
5	Making it happen	68
	Appendices	
	Appendix A Benchmark standards for play and informal recreation: a quick reference guide	75
	Appendix B Worked example of applying the space standard	80
	Appendix C Child occupancy of new social housing: DMAG briefing 2005/25: Child Yield	82
	Appendix D Further reading	86
	Appendix E Useful contacts	88



Foreword by Ken Livingstone

An important measure of any city is the extent to which its children and young people are able to achieve their potential and improve the quality of their life. Better play facilities, together with places to go and things to do for older children and teenagers, are consistently high on Londoners' priorities for improvement.

If children and young people are to have the chance to play out in the fresh air, to be physically active and to meet with friends and peers, then they need local space out of doors, accessible on foot or by bike. "Playable" spaces can, with good design, offer a range of leisure and recreation opportunities for people of all ages and enable the development of social networks and a sense of community belonging.

This Supplementary Planning Guidance sets out clear standards, backed up by good practice examples, for all those professionals involved in planning and designing local neighbourhoods. Preparation of the guidance has involved extensive consultation with the boroughs and other key partners.

I will use these standards to ensure that play and leisure facilities for children and young people are designed into all new housing developments referred to me and that play policies are included in local development plans. My ambition is to inspire and encourage more child-friendly neighbourhoods right across the capital.

Together with the considerable additional investment in play and in better places to go and things to do through my London Youth Offer, we should expect to see real improvements in the coming years.



Ken Livingstone
Mayor of London



© Liane Harris

Foreword by Nicky Gavron



For the first time, London has a planning policy, which will deliver good quality and accessible play and recreation space with new housing developments on a consistent and London-wide basis. The policy and this supporting Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) are “London specific”. They have been developed with borough councils and other interested groups including children and young people. They have been the subject of lengthy consultations and are supported by Government policies.

The justification is simple. There is a wealth of evidence that play and opportunities for informal recreation are vital for both a happy and healthy childhood and to a well balanced adult life.

Too many of London’s children and young people have to rely on inadequate and inaccessible play and recreation spaces, shoe-horned into poorly designed urban areas.

We see the new policy, fleshed out by this SPG, as an essential part of our strategy to make London a more sustainable city, providing a good quality of life and improving the public realm for all its citizens.

The new requirement, set out in this SPG, is to provide 10 square metres of well designed play and recreation space for every child to be accommodated in new housing developments. Appropriate and accessible facilities within 400 metres for 5-11 year olds or within 800 metres for 12 plus age groups may be acceptable alternatives. There may also be scope for innovative solutions outside these guidelines if they meet the criteria for quantity, quality and access. Long term maintenance should always be secured by legal agreement.

The London Plan is now part of the development plan in every London borough, which means that the policy and the standards set out here must be applied to all housing schemes in London.

We now have a situation where planners can work with developers and their architects, and with housing and play services, to design in play and recreation facilities from the very start of the development process.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicky Gavron".

Nicky Gavron
Deputy Mayor of London

Quick Reference Guide to Applying the Benchmark Standards

Identifying, Mapping and Auditing Current Provision

Step A1:

Establish a profile of the existing population

**Step A2:**

Establish accessibility levels of existing play space

**Step A3:**

Determine the quality of existing play provision

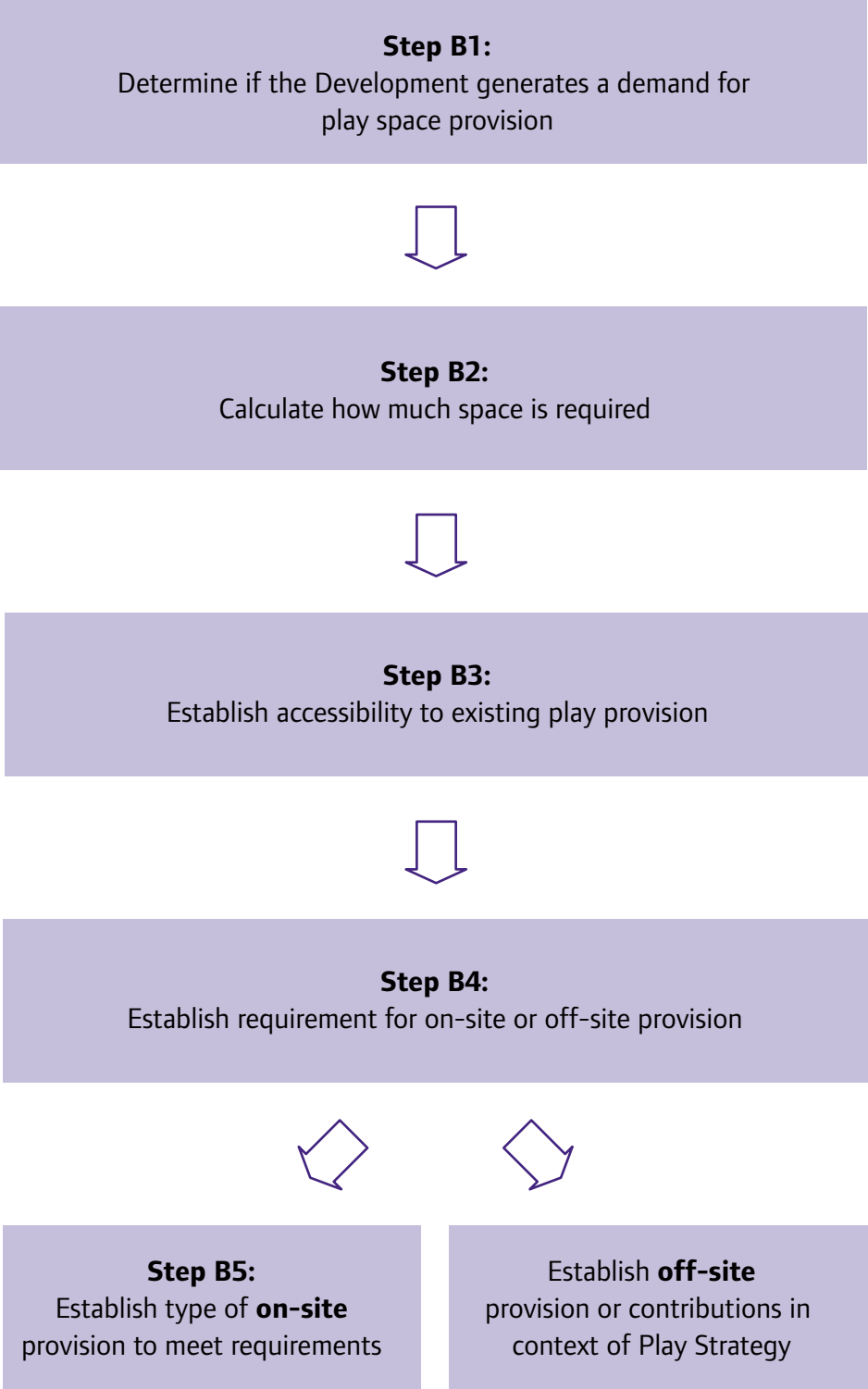
**Step A4:**

Establish requirement for provision to serve existing population

**Step A5:**

Identify existing areas of deficiency

Determining the Play Space Requirements for New Development



1 Introduction

‘All children and young people should be able to play within their local neighbourhoods and have safe and attractive play spaces within walking distance of their homes. For older children and young people, having opportunities to enjoy and develop their own cultural and recreational pursuits is equally important’

The Mayor’s Children and Young People’s Strategy, 2004

- 1.1 The London Plan (consolidated with amendments since 2004, hereafter referred to as the London Plan) provides the strategic framework to meet London’s economic and population growth to 2026. The main policy directions have remained the same since 2004, particularly the phenomenal pressures for growth and the need to accommodate a rapidly increasing population at higher densities. This rapid expansion of population and jobs is without parallel in any other UK city, and stems from London’s exceptional dynamism, attractiveness and advantages in the new era of economic globalisation. It poses unique opportunities – but also challenges – if the potential benefits are to be maximised and the city’s environment, quality of life and historic character are to be preserved and improved. This relates in particular to new housing development. It will be essential that new housing, both affordable and market, provides a high quality environment for all residents with sufficient high quality play and recreation space accessible by children and young people of different ages.
- 1.2 This supplementary planning guidance (SPG) has been prepared in response to these challenges. It offers guidance to London boroughs on providing for the play and recreation needs of children and young people under the age of 18 and the use of benchmark standards in the preparation of play strategies and in the implementation of Policy 3D.13 as set out in the London Plan.

Policy 3D.13 Children and young people's play and informal recreation strategies

The Mayor will, and boroughs and other partners should, ensure that all children have safe access to good quality, well-designed, secure and stimulating play and informal recreation provision. Boroughs should produce strategies on play and informal recreation to improve access and opportunity for all children and young people in their area.

Boroughs should undertake audits of existing play and informal recreation provision and assessments of need in their areas, considering the qualitative, quantitative and accessibility elements of play and informal recreation facilities.

The Mayor will, and boroughs should, ensure developments that include housing make provision for play and informal recreation, based on the expected child population generated by the scheme and an assessment of future needs.

3.310 In a densely developed, highly urbanised city like London, safe and stimulating play facilities are essential for a child's welfare and future development. However, many of London's children still do not have adequate access to such facilities. Even existing provision can be unsuitable because it cannot be accessed safely, because it caters for only a limited age group or because it is poorly maintained, unimaginatively designed, of poor quality or is insecure.

3.311 Play strategies should provide comprehensive guidance on play provision, high quality design and integration of play provision into overall Open Space Strategies. To assist with such strategies, the Mayor has produced a Guide to Preparing Play Strategies. Particular consideration should be given to consultation with children and young people in the design of new provision to understand their changing needs. This will include identifying requirements, opportunities to improve and upgrade provision and access to it in the light of the Mayor's Supplementary Planning Guidance on providing for children and young people's play and informal recreation. This should cover appropriate provision for different age groups, including consideration of communal space, roof gardens and indoor space for young people. Appropriate arrangements for management and maintenance of play and communal facilities should be provided.

3.312 Provision should normally be made on-site, and be in accordance with the play strategy for the area. Where a development is to be phased, there should be early implementation of the play space. Off-site provision including the creation of new facilities, improvements to existing provision, any necessary access improvements and an appropriate financial contribution secured by legal agreement towards this provision may be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that it fully satisfies the needs of the development whilst continuing to meet the needs of existing residents.

Raising the profile and quality of play and play provision

- 1.3 In a densely developed, highly urbanised city like London, the provision of safe, stimulating play facilities is essential to children's welfare, health and future development. They are a key component of an exemplary sustainable world city. However, whilst there is a growing awareness of the importance of providing good play opportunities and of the consequences when these do not meet local needs, there is increasing concern that children and young people's play and informal recreation opportunities are under threat.
- 1.4 Children and young people need free, inclusive and accessible spaces offering high-quality play and informal recreation opportunities and child-friendly neighbourhood environments. In practice, however, many of London's children and young people do not have adequate access to such facilities. Even existing provision can be unsuitable because it cannot be accessed safely, because it caters for only a limited age group or because it is poorly maintained, unimaginatively designed, of poor quality or is insecure.



© Tim Gill

A fallen tree in Clissold Park, Hackney, provides a focus for children's play

- 1.5 Good access to outdoor play opportunities is also a concern for parents. Research in 2006 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that a focus on play and public space was a key factor in making new and regenerated communities attractive to families (*A Good Place for Children? Attracting and Retaining Families in Inner Urban Mixed Income Communities*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, January 2006).

- 1.6 London is home to 1.72 million children and young people under the age of 18. London's 0 – 18 population is projected to increase by over 102,000 over the next ten years. A growth in play and informal recreation provision will be required to meet these needs and the needs of the existing population. The challenge facing boroughs and their partners in play provision is how to increase the provision of play and informal recreation opportunities and to make planning for play and young people's informal recreation more responsive to needs, improving the quality, range and accessibility of provision and encourage more innovative approaches.

Building on the current policy framework

- 1.7 The Government has recognised the need to make better provision for children's play as a theme that cuts across a range of policy areas from planning, open spaces and transport to health, education and childcare. The preparation of play strategies therefore forms an integral part of the strategic planning system and must be viewed in the context of the community strategy and local development framework and other related strategies covering areas such as regeneration, health, culture, education and crime and disorder in addition to open space.
- 1.8 The GLA has adopted policies and strategies on open space and children and young people that provide the strategic and policy context for the development of play standards. The Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy (2004) sets out the Mayor's vision for developing London as a 'genuinely child-friendly city' and contains specific policy commitments and action points about children's play and young people's leisure. The Guide to Preparing Play Strategies (2005) develops this policy commitment and provides guidance on the development of play strategies.

Children and Young People's Plan

- 1.9 Since April 2006, local authorities are required to produce a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) which sets out the local vision for children and young people, a strategic analysis showing how key outcomes will be achieved and the actions, timescales and costs involved. It links upwards to the community strategy and downwards to other local plans and strategies including the play strategy, to integrate the delivery of all services for children and young people in the area. The Big Lottery Fund's Children's Play Programme, which will see over £20 million invested in the capital over three years starting in 2006, require boroughs to produce play strategies as part of their proposals. Planning for Play, the play strategy guidance issued in March 2006 by the Big Lottery Fund, follows

the same approach as the Mayor’s Guide to Preparing Play Strategies. The Government’s Children’s Plan (launched in December 2007) strengthens the case for a strategic approach for play. It will see £225 million of new investment in play provision from Spring 2008, as part of a national play strategy.

Figure 1.1 Relationship of Play Strategy to other Strategies

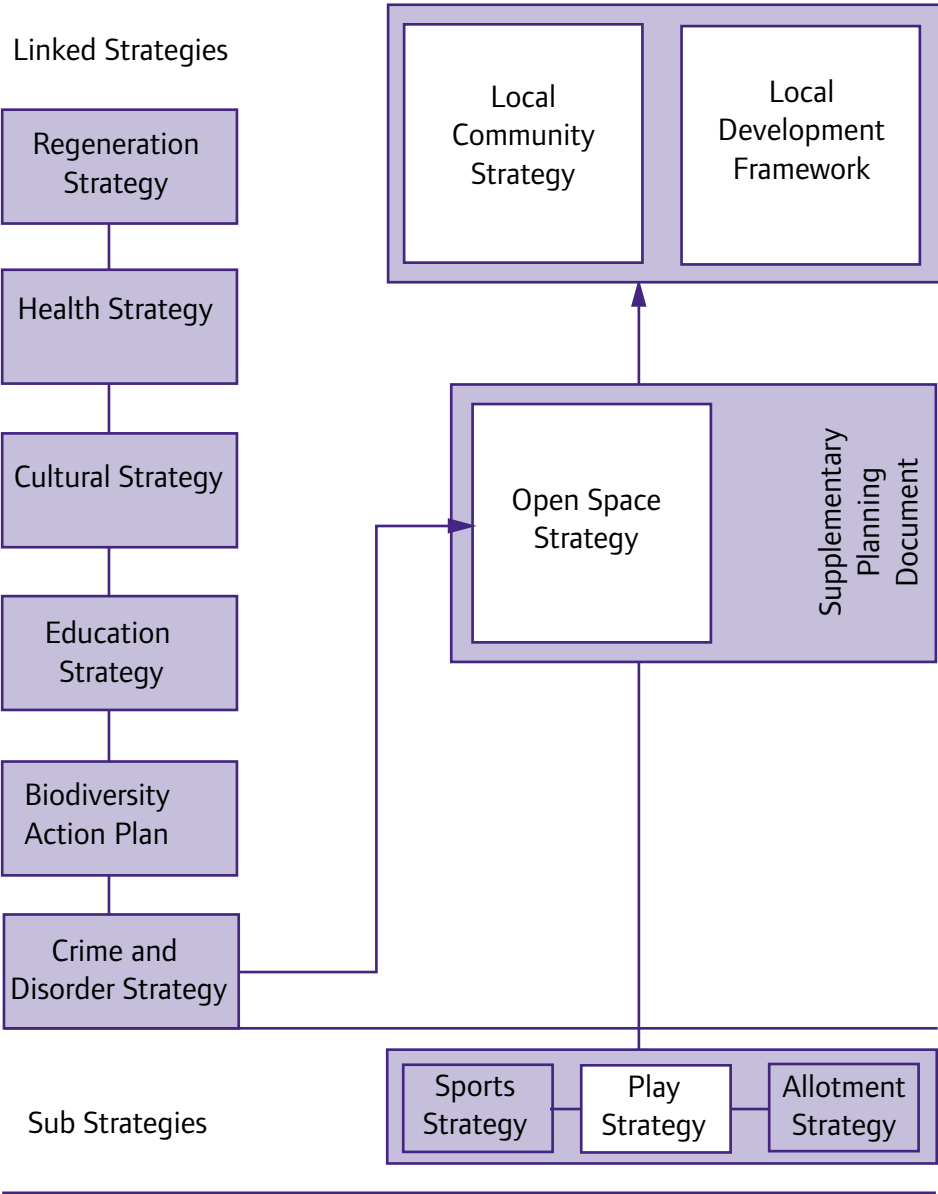
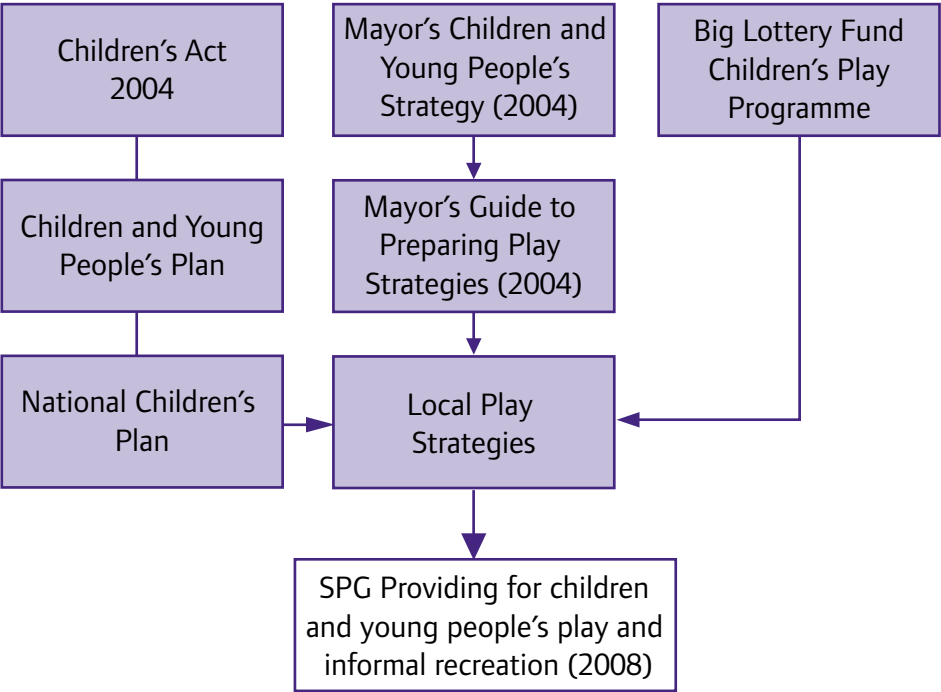


Table 1.1 Children’s and Play Strategies



Preparation of Play Strategies

- 1.10 In order to ensure future provision that meets the needs of children and young people, boroughs will need to assess the quantity, quality and current usage of existing play spaces and facilities and the current accessibility of the public realm against the needs of children and young people. The preparation of play strategies will provide comprehensive guidance on play provision including quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in provision relative to future need as well as mechanisms to address these. Play strategies will be required to take account of the importance of high quality design and integration of play provision into overall open space strategies and particular consideration should be given to consultation with children and young people in the design of new provision and improvement of existing facilities to help achieve their objectives. Play strategies will encompass all categories of play space and informal recreation areas including provision within housing areas and will identify opportunities to improve and upgrade provision and access to it in accordance with this supplementary planning guidance.
- 1.11 The issues of play and informal recreation should also be addressed in the planning of new provision to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Existing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies must be addressed and additional conveniently located capacity brought forward to meet future needs. This will generally be associated with new residential

development but account should also be taken of needs generated in other places with high child populations such as town centres.

Ensuring the standards are relevant

- 1.12 The development of benchmark standards for play and recreation provides additional guidance to London boroughs in developing play strategies and a focused play policy and will assist in securing funding for new and improved provision. Application of the standards should be set in the context of Play and Open Space Strategies and reflect local circumstances and needs.
- 1.13 The value of setting benchmark standards may be summarised as:
- To establish a baseline level of provision for comparative purposes;
 - To establish local and community needs;
 - To enable an objective assessment of where the worst deficiencies in provision are located and for action to be taken;
 - To set appropriate targets and priorities for different groups;
 - To support external funding bids;
 - To provide a negotiating position to secure on-site provision and where appropriate commuted payments as part of new development proposals; and
 - To address diversity issues and the sometimes differing needs of boys and girls, children with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups.
- 1.14 The benchmark standards set out in this document are intended to provide clear, practical guidance which can be applied in the development of play strategies, pre-application negotiations and planning application decisions. The standards are intended to ensure that changes lead to sustainable improvements in children and young people's play and leisure provision in terms of quantity, accessibility and quality. This SPG provides guidelines on the requirements for play and informal recreation space provision for children and young people and in particular to:
- give clarity to developers, local authorities, housing bodies and other play providers;
 - be flexible and responsive to needs and circumstances by taking into account local population characteristics, existing play provision and the needs of different age groups;
 - assist in identifying needs for play provision and how these could be accommodated;
 - provide guidance on how to calculate the requirement for play and open space for any development and a framework which can be easily

applied to housing proposals to ensure adequate on- and off-site provision is made to meet the demand created by the development;

- take into account parks and open spaces that offer good informal play opportunities and potential for multi-functional use even if they do not at present include formal play provision;
- encourage and make the case for more innovative approaches to play provision in terms of facilities, location, accessibility, design (including use of natural features) and management;
- address issues of accessibility to new and existing facilities and the critical issue of site location; and
- provide best practice guidance on how to use resources cost-effectively and secure adequate revenue streams for maintenance and upkeep including developer contributions.

Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 1.15 This Supplementary Planning Guidance relates to the implementation of London Plan Policy 3D.13 and provides the opportunity for more detailed guidance that cannot be covered in the plan. It is a companion to the *Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies (2005)*, and these two documents should be read in conjunction with each other. It sets out the policy context and background related to raising the expectations for provision of play and informal recreation in London. It offers a step-by-step approach to ensuring that the recreational needs of children and young people are met locally in accordance with Policy 3D.13 and provides guidance for developers and planners to use as tools in developing new provision in the future.
- 1.16 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is intended to be used by planners, developers and designers (landscape architects, urban designers and architects) in taking forward proposals for play provision across London. Each type of audience will draw from particular elements of the SPG, though understanding the context and rationale behind each stage of the application of the Supplementary Planning Guidance is fundamental to its successful implementation.
- 1.17 The benchmark standards are intended to provide a tool for assisting in the development of local standards and to be flexible enough to meet the varying needs of children and young people across London, taking into account differences in local circumstances. It is recommended that Boroughs should use the benchmark standards in setting local standards in the context of their open space and play strategies. A consistent approach is, however, promoted to ensure that opportunities for improving existing provision and securing high quality new play provision to meet the needs of children and young people are maximised.

2 Delivering a child and young person friendly environment

- 2.1 This section outlines national and local policy guidance on providing for the play and informal recreational needs of children and young people and the current application of standards.

National Policy Context

- 2.2 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG17) Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002) addresses the needs for different types of open spaces. The guidance recognises that the provision of open space assists the regeneration and enhancement of the physical environment and supports the encouragement of a healthy lifestyle. Play for young children is important in providing a significant means of socialising with other children outside the school or home environment. Good play and leisure facilities are critical to improving young people's life chances and tackling poverty. The Government's Children's Plan (launched in 2007) announced a review of statutory planning guidance. It also intends to publish a first national play strategy by summer 2008.
- 2.3 PPG17 encourages local planning authorities to develop local standards relating to quantity, quality and accessibility and states '...Local authorities should ensure that provision is made for local sports and recreation facilities (either through an increase in the number of facilities or through improvements to existing facilities) where planning permission is granted for new development (especially housing). Planning obligations should be used where appropriate to seek increased provision of open spaces and local sports and recreational facilities and the enhancement of existing facilities'. The guidance also states that '...Planning obligations should be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the quality and quantity of open space, sport and recreation provision. Local authorities will be justified in seeking planning obligations where the quantity or quality of provision is inadequate or under threat or where new development increases local needs'.
- 2.4 Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing (November 2006) highlights the commitment to high quality design of new housing development and the importance of integrating play and informal recreation in planning for mixed communities. It is designed to make planning more responsive to housing need and demand, ensuring everyone has the opportunity of a decent home in a community where they want to live. The overall objective is to deliver sustainable communities with the right mix of homes, services, jobs and green spaces that residents need.

2.5 Table 2.1 sets out the typology of open space identified in PPG17. Provision for children and young people is identified as a separate category but it is evident that children and young people make use of most if not all of the spaces identified in the typology.

Table 2.1 Open Space Typology (PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (July 2002))

Typology	Description
i. Parks and gardens	Including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens
ii. Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces	Including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and derelict open land and rock areas
iii. Green corridors	Including river and canal banks, cycleways and rights of way
iv. Outdoor sports facilities	Including tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks, school and other institutional playing fields, and other outdoor sports areas
v. Amenity greenspace	Including informal recreation spaces, greenspaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens
vi. Provision for children and teenagers	Including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops, other informal areas
vii. Allotments, community gardens and city farms	
viii. Cemeteries and churchyards	
ix. Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas	
x. Civic spaces	Including civic and market squares and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians

Strategic Context

- 2.6 The London Plan includes policies relating to London’s green infrastructure and open spaces with a specific policy relating to the provision of play and informal recreation.
- 2.7 This Supplementary Planning Guidance is non statutory but will be a material consideration in determining planning applications and at planning appeals.
- 2.8 London’s public open space hierarchy provides a benchmark for the provision of public open space across London. It categorises spaces according to their size and sets out a maximum desirable distance that

Londoners should travel in order to access each category of open space. The public open space hierarchy does not specify play provision for children and young people but play and informal recreation opportunities can be found in each category of open space according to size and characteristics. London's public open space hierarchy is set out in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 London's public open space hierarchy

Open space categorisation	Size guideline	Distances from homes
Regional Parks Large areas, corridors or networks of open space, the majority of which will be publicly accessible and provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits. Offer a combination of facilities and features that are unique within London, are readily accessible by public transport and are managed to meet best practice quality standards.	400 hectares	3.2 to 8 kilometres
Metropolitan Parks Large areas of open space that provide a similar range of benefits to Regional Parks and offer a combination of facilities and features at the sub-regional level, are readily accessible by public transport and are managed to meet best practice quality standards.	60 hectares	3.2 kilometres
District Parks Large areas of open space that provide a landscape setting with a variety of natural features providing for a wide range of activities, including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children's play for different age groups and informal recreation pursuits.	20 hectares	1.2 kilometres
Local Parks and Open Spaces Providing for court games, children's play, sitting-out areas and nature conservation areas.	2 hectares	400 metres
Small Open Spaces Gardens, sitting-out areas, children's play spaces or other areas of a specialist nature, including nature conservation areas.	Under 2 hectares	Less than 400 metres
Pocket Parks Small areas of open space that provide natural surfaces and shaded areas for informal play and passive recreation that sometimes have seating and play equipment.	Under 0.4ha	Less than 400 metres
Linear Open Spaces Open spaces and towpaths alongside the Thames, canals and other waterways; paths; disused railways; nature conservation areas; and other routes that provide opportunities for informal recreation. Often characterised by features or attractive areas which are not fully accessible to the public but contribute to the enjoyment of the space.	Variable	Wherever feasible

source GLA

- 2.9 The hierarchy has been used to identify areas of deficiency in open space provision. However, a more focused and fine-grained approach is needed for play space and informal recreation provision for children and young people. New policies have therefore been developed to address the provision of play and informal recreation. Policy 3D.13 addresses the specific requirements arising from new development.
- 2.10 Policy 3D.13 identifies the requirement for the provision of play and informal recreation within London as well as the need for London Boroughs to prepare play and informal recreation strategies to improve access and opportunity for all children and young people across London. This Supplementary Planning Guidance provides more detailed advice to assist implementation of this policy.
- 2.11 The plan states that play strategies should provide comprehensive guidance on play provision, high quality design and integration of play provision into overall open space strategies. To assist with such strategies, the Mayor has produced a *Guide to Preparing Play Strategies (2005)*. Particular consideration should be given to consultation with children and young people in design of new provision to understand their changing needs. This will include identifying opportunities to improve and upgrade provision and access to it in the light of the Supplementary Planning Guidance on providing for children and young people's play and informal recreation. The plan states that provision should normally be made on-site, and be in accordance with the play strategy for the area. Off-site provision including the creation of new facilities, improvements to existing provision, any necessary access improvements and an appropriate financial contribution towards this provision may be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that there are planning constraints that restrict on-site provision and that it fully satisfies the needs of the development whilst continuing to meet the needs of existing residents.
- 2.12 Play and informal recreation is also addressed in a number of the Mayor's cross-cutting strategies and programmes. The overarching strategy is set out in *Making London Better for All Children and Young People*, but a number of other strategies are relevant, including the Mayor's Transport, Culture and Childcare strategies, the Mayor's Youth Offer and Walking Plan for London. The Mayor's 100 Public Spaces Programme is an initiative of Design for London aiming to create or upgrade 100 public spaces in London. These strategies promote the wide ranging benefits of open space and set out the need to make London a more child-friendly city, including opportunities to make streets safer for children, the creation of new and diverse opportunities for play, places to go and things for young people, and the promotion of open space as a cultural

resource for London. Design for London is also developing guidance on housing design for developments where the Mayor influences investment decisions. It will reflect the needs of children and young people in setting out design of open spaces, internal space standards and environmental requirements for high density housing in London.

- 2.13 Policy 3D.13 in the London Plan sets out the requirement for boroughs to produce local play strategies to improve the opportunities for play for children and young people. The *Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies* (2005) sets out guidelines for London boroughs and advises that standards for local play provision should be adapted locally, focussing on quality, accessibility and quantity. The link between benchmark standards and local play strategies is essential, as the standards can be applied most effectively when boroughs have an understanding of the state of play and informal recreation provision in the area locally. This will facilitate the application of standards and will ensure that the standards applied reflect local circumstances.



© Tim Gill

The Cherry Orchard Estate in Greenwich has introduced a range of measures to make the public realm more child-friendly, including improving pedestrian gateways, creating shared use 'safe routes to school' walk- and cycleways through the estate, and careful use of fencing to create spaces that appear to be semi-private but are in fact open to the public. The estate is managed by Charlton Triangle Homes, who worked with Groundwork SE London and residents in the development of proposals.

- 2.14 The Mayor's *Guide to Preparing Play Strategies* (2005) highlights the importance of inclusive play provision and ensuring equality of access to play and leisure activities for all children including both boys and girls, children with disabilities and black and ethnic minority children. It identifies a number of mechanisms for engaging with children and young people in order to determine children's needs and to assess how current provision is being used. A range of strategies for engaging with children should be applied as appropriate to local needs and circumstances. Consultation with children and young people is a critical step in the development of a play strategy, and the development of local standards alongside a play strategy should build on this basis for community engagement.

Current Application of Standards

- 2.15 A number of measures are currently used in planning for play provision but they are subject to a considerable degree of interpretation and whilst they may be used as benchmarks against which progress can be evaluated and for indicative purposes, they do not provide clear or consistent guidance for planners or developers in addressing the needs of young people in new or existing developments. The assessment of play provision has been largely focused on measures of quantity and accessibility and has not addressed issues of quality.
- 2.16 The National Playing Field Association (NPFA) Six Acre Standard is the most widely used standard for play provision. The NPFA standard sets quantitative guidelines for the provision of play facilities in new developments by population. It sets a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.4ha (6 acres) for 1,000 people. This is sub-divided into:
- 1.6ha (4 acres) per 1,000 population of outdoor sport; and
 - 0.8ha (2 acres) per 1,000 population for children's play.
- 2.17 Designated areas are custom designed for any new development and the amount of space required will depend on the design and layout of the development, the NPFA accessibility criteria (walking times) and the detailed criteria relating to Local Areas of Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPs).
- 2.18 The NPFA accessibility guidelines relate to specific types of play facilities and are set out in Table 2.3. The standards focus on formal playground provision with fixed equipment and do not consider in detail other types of play provision and informal recreation spaces. If applied to the average child population (aged 0-16), the standard 8 sq m children's play per person would equate to 40 sq m play space per child.

- 2.19 'The Six Acre Standard' was last published in 2001 and the NPFA (Fields in Trust) is currently undertaking a review of benchmark standards for outdoor sport and play provision as a tool for assisting in the development of local standards. This Supplementary Planning Guidance includes standards that have been developed in consultation with London boroughs and stakeholders and are considered appropriate to the London context.

Table 2.3 NPFA Standards for Play Provision

Facility	Time	Walking distance	Radial Distance	Minimum Size	Nearest Dwelling	Characteristics
Local Area of Play (LAP)	1 min	100m	60m	100 sq.m.	5m from activity zone	Small, low-key games area
Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)	5 min	400m	240m	400 sq.m.	10m from activity zone	5 types of equipment, small games area
Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP)	15 min	1,000m	600m	1,000 sq.m.	30m from activity zone	8 types of equipment, opportunities for ball games or wheeled activities

- 2.20 In the past, unitary development plans have referred to the NPFA Six Acre Standard as a measure of children's play provision. Some boroughs have identified other tools to be used in planning for play provision locally, including the use of demographic indicators such as child densities, proximity to homes with gardens and physical barriers. Others have identified quantifiable space requirements to apply to new developments, which specify a quantum of space per child bedspace in new developments (e.g. Southwark and Ealing).
- 2.21 Consultation with London boroughs indicates that limited practical use is currently being made of existing standards because they do not accurately assess local needs or reflect local characteristics in terms of population profile and existing provision. Where standards are being applied, they tend to be used as aspirational standards or to measure deficiency in existing provision. It is also generally considered that current NPFA standards are not achievable within existing highly urbanised areas and at a time when emphasis is being placed on the promotion of higher density residential and mixed-use development schemes. However, it is recognised that standards are useful as benchmarks against which progress can be evaluated and as planning tools.

2.22 London boroughs advise that the current use of standards gives rise to a number of issues which affect their applicability in practice, in particular:

- There is a need to take into account the character of the area or specific development. Child densities across London and in specific developments will vary dependent on the type and tenure of housing, and current standards do not reflect these characteristics. In particular, the standards are difficult to achieve in Inner London and in high density development schemes;
- Not all children's playspace falls into the standard categories of playgrounds. There is a need to reflect the diverse needs of children and young people and the potential to meet needs for play through the multi-functional use of other categories of space;
- Local needs and circumstances vary across London and across England. Application of national standards is felt to be difficult because of local variations in needs. Standards should therefore be capable of adaptation to reflect local circumstances;
- Resource limitations. Lack of constant revenue funding creates problems for play areas requiring ongoing maintenance, supervision or management. Large numbers of small play areas are seen as problematic for maintenance reasons.
- Current standards may promote a standardisation of facilities based on fixed equipment. Opportunities for creating more interesting or innovative play spaces may be limited by existing practice.
- Most London Boroughs are operating from a position of constant deficiency. Quantitative requirements which are set too high for London's characteristics may not be the best tool in planning for new space or ensuring enhancements to existing facilities. Furthermore, some boroughs (especially in inner London) have a fairly fixed basic pattern of open space and the opportunities for significantly increasing existing provision are generally limited.

2.23 Stimulating play facilities are essential for a child's welfare and future development in a densely developed city like London where many children still do not have adequate access to play facilities, with high levels of child poverty and where the child population is forecast to grow significantly. In addition to providing guidance on new provision to meet the needs arising from new development, play strategies must also identify opportunities to improve and upgrade existing play provision and access to it in order to meet existing deficiencies in provision.

- 2.24 Since the publication of the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation for public consultation, a number of London boroughs have taken up the guidance set out in the SPG for use in reviewing planning applications. The GLA has also introduced use of the draft SPG in reviewing planning applications for large schemes, and the step-by-step guidance is proving useful in evaluating schemes.

3 Raising aspirations and expectations for play

‘Two thirds of 9-11 year olds in the UK are dissatisfied with the quality of outdoor play facilities where they live. For 15-16 year olds this rose to 81% higher than any other European country’

Green Spaces: Better Places, DTLR, May 2002

The state of play in London

- 3.1 Play is difficult to define, though easier to identify. In planning for play provision, it is necessary to recognise the great diversity of play and that requirements for play provision will vary according to local characteristics and needs.
- 3.2 In London, as elsewhere, children and young people make use of many different types of public space for their play and recreation. The most common and recognisable public space where children play is in public playgrounds. But they also play in parks, streets, housing areas, civic squares, town centres, playing fields, woodlands, natural and semi-natural spaces and elsewhere. In fact, almost all types of public and open space have the potential to be valuable places for children and young people.



© Tim Gill

This public space in central London shows the appeal and playfulness of well designed water features

- 3.3 Even though many types of open space are potentially suitable for play, in many parts of London there is little or no public space of any type available for play near to children's homes. Play has historically been a low priority for planners and developers, so provision in new developments has often been poor in both quantity and quality. Spaces have sometimes been placed in inappropriate parts of developments and estates, making

misuse, vandalism and neglect more likely. In addition, poor open space planning has in some housing estates led to pockets of green or open space adjacent to housing where play is positively discouraged because of potential impacts on residential amenity. Finally safety fears, largely a result of traffic growth and road danger, but also a consequence of fear of crime and abduction, have left many children and young people with fewer opportunities to walk or cycle independently around their neighbourhoods. As a result, children and young people often do not have access to spaces located close to their homes.

- 3.4 Although children and young people use and value many different types of space, planners and others have historically relied on a limited number of models for the kinds of space to be provided for them. Providing for children and young people has historically been largely seen as a matter of installing fenced-off play areas with safety surfacing and fixed play equipment (or variations on these for older young people). This approach has led to artificial, inflexible spaces that make a narrow offer to children and hold little attraction to the wider community. It has also reinforced the view that children and young people should be corralled into specially designated areas, rather than being allowed to play in the wider public realm. Whilst clearly designated and bounded spaces may be of value, especially to younger children and their carers, the overall objective should be the provision of well located, well designed and functional spaces that are accessible to children and young people and an integrated part of the wider public realm. The public policy profile of play has risen in recent years, along with increased funding. As a result, more innovative, exciting initiatives are coming forward.

‘[Using a formulaic approach] tends to result in children’s play being allocated to the more unbuildable parts of housing sites and often ignores the needs of older children, such as teenagers. It can sometimes place the design of play areas in the hands of manufacturers with a vested interest in selling their products. Other European countries have developed approaches which use pieces of timber and different surfaces to create exciting and naturalistic play environments, better integrated with their surroundings than areas of safety surfacing surrounded by dog-proof fences and containing a few pieces of brightly coloured equipment’.

Assessing Needs and Opportunities: Planning Policy Guidance 17
companion guide, ODPM 2002

- 3.5 The design of play space has in turn largely been driven by the concerns of providers to minimise three elements: capital cost, the risk of liability and the costs of ongoing management and maintenance. There has been little regard for what children and young people need or value in a playful

space. As a result, designs (with a few exceptions) have been at best formulaic, at worst an insult to those they are intended for. On top of this, pressures on budgets and the low status of play has led to inadequate maintenance of many spaces, leading them to fall into neglect.

A safe place to play

- 3.6 Provision is also shaped by fears, beliefs and attitudes about the behaviour and activities of children and young people. While in a few areas a minority of children and young people are a significant cause of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, this is the exception, not the rule. In some cases the mere presence of children and young people in public space is felt to be a cause for concern, regardless of their behaviour. Such attitudes need to be challenged if relations between children and young people and others in the community are to be based on tolerance and mutual respect.
- 3.7 Minor misdemeanours and transgressions are common in many people's childhoods, and children and young people have probably always behaved inappropriately on occasion. It is unrealistic to expect that they will never be a source of annoyance in public spaces, and unfair to deny them space on the basis that they may be so in future. The aim should be to create spaces where conflicts and disagreements are typically minor and easily resolved, and where more serious problems can be dealt with appropriately. This will involve a mix of design, informal oversight, supervision, security measures and enforcement.
- 3.8 Research commissioned by CABE Space has shown that 'place making' – improving the design, maintenance and supervision of parks and public spaces – is a more effective solution to anti-social behaviour than simply increasing security measures (*Start with the Park: Creating Sustainable urban Green Spaces in Areas of Housing Growth and Renewal* (CABE Space, July 2005)).
- 3.9 Boroughs will need to take a broader view of play provision and to plan for the widest range of play opportunities and spaces from dedicated provision to child-friendly parks, open spaces and streets. The objective must be to develop more and better play spaces and opportunities, a more-child friendly public realm and greater recognition of the importance of play.



© Snug and Outdoor

Evergreen Square is a refurbished public space on the Holly Street Estate, Hackney which has been substantially rebuilt under the Comprehensive Estates Initiative. This compact space includes changes of level, a grassed area and hard landscaping (incorporating the text of a specially-commissioned poem written with input from local children), alongside more conventional play equipment.

What makes a good place for play?

- 3.10 A good space for play does not happen by accident. Success is a matter of securing enough physical space in the right locations, understanding user requirements, designing and creating spaces that attract and engage children and young people, and ensuring appropriate long-term management and maintenance.
- 3.11 A good place for play is dependent on a number of key elements:
- Space - ensuring there is sufficient space to accommodate a range of activities;
 - Location and accessibility - ensuring that play spaces are suitably located and accessible within an acceptable walking distance of the home;
 - Quality and design - ensuring that play spaces are integrated into their surroundings and are well designed, attractive and safe with a range of activities and facilities for different age groups; and
 - Management and maintenance - ensuring that play spaces are well managed and maintained.

Space

- 3.12 If children and young people are to have the chance to play out in the fresh air, to be physically active and to meet with friends and peers, then they need space out of doors that offers free access. Gardens and private outdoor space, while valued by some children, do not offer them the space, freedom of mobility or range of activities and social contact they need and want. The strong links between outdoor play and children's health and well-being reinforce the case for seeing good access to public space as something that every child in London is entitled to expect. The first step to securing this entitlement is ensuring there is sufficient physical space in the neighbourhoods where children live. The benchmark standards should establish a more appropriate quantitative standard, which more closely reflects the London situation.
- 3.13 It is important to provide space for play and informal recreation as part of new housing developments. There is a case for linking the amount of space devoted to play to the numbers of children living, or expected to be living, in the proposed development.

Location and accessibility

- 3.14 Though securing physical space is a vital first step to creating good play spaces, it is not enough. Those spaces need to be near to where children and young people live and easy for them to reach. *Child's Play: Facilitating play on housing estates* shows that the location of a place for play is the single most important key to its success.
- 3.15 Location is partly a matter of physical proximity to children's homes, to their schools and to other places where they spend their time. Studies show dramatic decreases in children's independent mobility and this has affected their access to play opportunities. Young children are dependent on their parents or carers to get to and from places for play. So spaces need to be within easy walking and pram-pushing distance if they are to be regularly used. As children grow up, their 'home territory' grows and they have more freedom to get around on their own, they will be able and willing to travel further to get to places where they can play and hang out.
- 3.16 Well-located places for play are ones that are well-connected with the wider built environment. Location is critical in generating a sense of social safety and security. This means that facilities should be close to walking or cycling 'desire lines' and with informal oversight from nearby housing, shops, cafes or other facilities. They should not be isolated by large expanses of open space, or severed from the rest of a neighbourhood by physical barriers such as busy roads or railway lines. Access can also be limited by social risks, such as areas that are known or widely perceived to

be a focus for street crime or harassment. Older young people tend to prefer a degree of separation from others, so spaces for them can be more removed. But they still need to be easily accessible and visible within neighbourhoods, not tucked away out of sight. In new developments, the use of roofs and terraces may provide an alternative to ground floor open space where they are large enough and indoor space may be appropriate for some facilities for older children/young people. All places for play should, however, be fit for purpose- safe, convenient and accessible.



© Tim Gill

This young people's space has been designed as an integral part of a large new housing development in Freiburg, Germany. The space also includes a football pitch.

Quality and design

- 3.17 Designing good places for play is a skill that requires technical knowledge, experience and a grasp of how children and young people use public space for their play and free time. It is not just a matter of simply selecting play equipment from a catalogue. The primary focus of play space design should be the creation of attractive, engaging places for children and young people. In this, site context and topography are as important as equipment in creating an attractive, engaging place for play. Hence standards for the design of places for play should address landscaping, equipment and surfacing together. Designs should take into account the needs and wishes of parents and carers – for instance, places to sit – as well as those of children and young people. This is especially important in spaces for younger children.
- 3.18 Play space is more than equipped playgrounds and it is widely recognised that not all play spaces fall within the categories identified in the NPFA classification of Local Areas of Play (LAPS), Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPS) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPS). Likewise,

the standards and guidelines promoted by the Secured by Design initiative and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), while of value, reflect the perspectives and concerns of their sponsors. A broader, more flexible typology of play spaces is required to reflect a more holistic approach to quality and to the types of space that children and young people enjoy.



© Tim Gill

These informal recreation spaces are part of a set of youth spaces alongside a cycleway on the edge of Grolitzerpark, Berlin.

- 3.19 Good places for play will include a degree of physical challenge and allow managed opportunities for children and young people to take risks. Children and young people value risk and challenge in their play. There is a growing consensus that play space design has become overly influenced by fear of litigation and a subsequent drive to minimise injuries. The risk of injury cannot be eliminated in any space, and minor and easily healed injuries are part of every child's experience. Historically, providers have tended to take the view that play spaces should be designed to minimise accidents and injuries of any kind. This has led to the installation of sterile and unchallenging play spaces. This is not just poor use of resources. Over-safe playgrounds may, paradoxically, create more danger for children by increasing the likelihood that they will seek out other, more dangerous places to play.

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. 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 injury.

Providers should strike a balance between the risks and the benefits. This should be done on the basis of a risk assessment. Crucially, this risk assessment should involve a risk-benefit trade-off between safety and other goals, which should be spelt out in the provider's policy. Given children's appetite for risk-taking, one of the factors that should be considered is the likelihood that children will seek out risks elsewhere, in environments that are not controlled or designed for them, if play provision is not challenging enough. Another factor is the learning that can take place when children are exposed to, and have to learn to deal with, environmental hazards. Play provision is uniquely placed to offer children the chance to learn about risk in an environment designed for that purpose, and thus to help children equip themselves to deal with similar hazards in the wider world.

Safety in play provision is not absolute and cannot be addressed in isolation. Play provision is first and foremost for children, and if it is not exciting and attractive to them, then it will fail, no matter how 'safe' it is.

Managing Risk in Play Provision, Play Safety Forum, 2002



All Mead Gardens is a refurbished play area on the Kingsmead Estate, Hackney. This estate of 17 five-storey blocks was originally built in the 1930s and is now part of the Shaftesbury Housing Group. This busy play space has a Viking theme, inspired by the historical presence of Vikings in the area. It incorporates changes of level, challenging equipment including a large slide and zipwire, water jets, bespoke play sculptures, trees, hard landscaping and a small grassed area.

- 3.20 There is widespread confusion about the purpose, status and content of the European standards that apply to outdoor play equipment. These standards aim to reduce the risk of serious or life-threatening injury through setting out technical specifications about such issues as the design and siting of outdoor play equipment and the use of safety surfacing. The charity PLAYLINK has commissioned expert legal opinion that concluded that compliance with standards is only part of what needs to be in place to ensure play spaces are safe enough. To quote RoSPA's website:

[The European standards] are not... a legal requirement but 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.

- 3.21 Over-reliance on safety measures is common, based on poor understanding of the European standards. To take one example, and one common area of confusion, the relevant standard only specifies the use of specially-fitted impact absorbing surfacing for drop heights from equipment of 1000 mm or greater. The standard does not specify safety surfacing of any kind where the drop height is less than 600 mm. For heights of between 600 mm and 1000 mm the standard states that grass or topsoil provides sufficient safety benefits. Thoughtful use of landscaping and changes of level can thus drastically reduce the need for expensive equipment and safety surfacing, adding richness and variety to spaces and potentially offering cost savings. Play England is taking forward two relevant publications: one on designing play spaces, and one on managing risk in play provision.



This multi-use games area in Thornhill Road, Islington demonstrates how active spaces can be integrated into residential areas



© Lindsey Houston

Nature Playground, Freiburg, Germany. Freiburg has a policy of installing naturalistic spaces that create rich play environments. Typically they include a few pieces of play equipment. The spaces make use of mounds, ditches, logs, boulders, fallen trees, bushes and wild flowers and most include hand water pumps. Few are fenced in or gated and natural barriers, low walls and plantings are used to define the space. Safety surfacing is used very sparingly, with pea gravel, sand or bark preferred over rubber or matting. The play spaces meet European safety standards. They are typically about half the capital cost of a conventional fixed equipment play area of the same size, while running costs are the same.

- 3.22 Good design can also help to make spaces be – and feel – more secure for children and young people and their parents and carers, and less prone to misuse or vandalism. In spaces where personal security or bullying is a major problem, supervision and/or programmes of facilitated activities can help improve security and build up usage by different groups.
- 3.23 Attractive, welcoming design is not incompatible with site security. In its policy note *Preventing Anti-Social Behaviour in Public Spaces* CABE Space emphasizes the value of good design and ‘place making’ to “create public spaces that the community will want to use and enjoy.” It warns against the blanket adoption of security measures and ‘target hardening’ (“the redesign of facilities and equipment to make them near indestructible”), arguing that such approaches should be “employed selectively where they will be effective, as part of a co-ordinated approach.” Another CABE Space publication, *Decent Parks, Decent Behaviour?* states that one of

the ways to improve behaviour in public spaces is to 'provide activities and facilities to ensure young people feel a sense of ownership [and] to address young people's fear of crime as well as that of adults.'

"If we want young people to flourish and if we want to divert [them] from anti-social behaviour, thinking about what the community can provide really counts. Some adults perceive teenagers on the streets as a problem and teenagers want safe spaces to hang out. Surely we must somehow be able to square that circle. But at present, all too often what teenagers get is what adults decide is right for them and that, I think, is where things can start to go wrong. It's often not that facilities don't exist, but that the teenagers don't like what is on offer."

Margaret Hodge, then Minister for Children and Families, 2005

Management and maintenance

- 3.24 Good design and the right location can help to create successful places for play, but they will only remain successful if an effective management and maintenance regime is in place. All spaces will require a degree of ongoing inspection and site maintenance, and the responsibility for this should be clarified at the outset.
- 3.25 One aspect of management that many children and young people and parents are concerned about is the control of dogs and potential related health hazards. Historically play spaces have relied upon dog-proof fencing to keep dogs out. However, even where fences do successfully keep dogs out of a play area, the result is often that dogs are a problem in the rest of the open spaces around it, limiting children's access to, and enjoyment of, these spaces. A more effective approach would be to ensure that dog owners act responsibly in all green and open spaces, through the provision and siting of appropriate facilities, education and enforcement. Such an approach could usefully be incorporated into open spaces strategies and management plans.
- 3.26 Whilst an element of boundary play space is likely to remain important, particularly for younger children, careful consideration should be given to the requirement for overall fencing in the design of play spaces. This should take into account the age of children using the play space, the character of the surrounding area and potential hazards. Further guidance on the use of fencing is provided in paragraph 4.60.

A new approach: from play areas to playable spaces

- 3.27 In London, where space is increasingly at a premium, planners and developers need to take a new approach: one that recognises the ways that children and young people use different types of public space, and

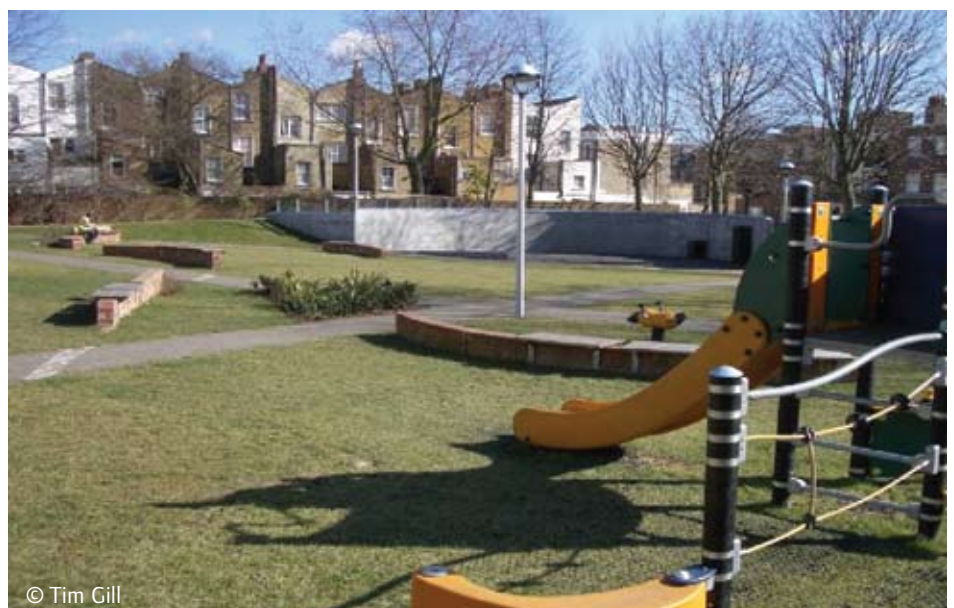
that allows for flexible use of spaces so that many different user groups can enjoy them. This approach also needs to promote inclusive provision and access to all children and a greater diversity of facilities to meet the needs of ethnic minority groups. Many public spaces have daily, weekly and seasonal patterns of usage: used by older people and carers of pre-school children during weekdays, by school-aged children after school and at the weekends and by older young people in the evenings. Successful spaces accommodate these rhythms of use by ensuring that the main user groups all feel the space has something for them. This does not mean that all public space should be the same, or that there is no need for play equipment or other facilities for children. It means that spaces should be designed and managed so as to make engaging offers to a wide range of potential users.

- 3.28 For children and young people, the key feature of a successful space for play is its 'playability'. A playable space is one where children's active play is a legitimate use of the space. Playability is a feature of fixed equipment play areas. But it is also a feature of some parks, recreation grounds, natural areas and other types of public open space.
- 3.29 Playable space typically includes some design elements that have 'play value': they act as a sign or signal to children and young people that the space is intended for their play. Fixed equipment obviously has play value, but so do other elements such as informal recreation facilities or playful landscaping features. Spaces can, with good design, be multifunctional, offering a range of leisure and recreation opportunities for users of all ages, as well as being playable. The forthcoming Play England publication on designing play spaces will give guidance on creating playable space.
- 3.30 Playability is not just a matter of the physical characteristics of a space. It can also be influenced by social and cultural characteristics. For instance, a space that is dominated by people who are hostile to children's presence is obviously not playable, whatever its physical characteristics.



© Sarah Blee

Edward Square is an award winning small green space in Camden, built in 2000 with funding from the Kings Cross Partnership and designed with extensive community involvement. It is a multi-functional space with hard landscaping (incorporating the text of a specially-commissioned poem by Poet Laureate Andrew Motion), some play equipment – which is not separately fenced off – benches and other seating, grassy areas, a pergola and boulders arranged to create an outdoor classroom.



© Tim Gill

Landseer gardens, Islington: a multi-functional space.

Developing Benchmark Standards

- 3.31 The regional benchmark standards have been developed to address the need for playable space by promoting an approach to play provision that reflects local circumstances and provides guidance on the following issues:
- Density of development, particularly related to the child occupancy of a development. This reflects the characteristics of the development by taking into account child populations, which vary based on the type and tenure of housing.
 - Development mix including play provision in residential and mixed-use developments that have a residential element, including town centre development schemes.
 - Accessibility, with consideration for the needs of children of different ages to play at appropriate distances from home.
 - Quality and diversity of provision, to reduce reliance on standardised equipment and provide children and young people with a range of recreational opportunities that encourage creativity in design.
 - Consideration of how to identify other types of spaces used by young people that do not currently fall into the LAP/LEAP/NEAP definition.
 - Identification of opportunities for enhancement of existing provision, particularly in cases where provision related to new developments is best met off-site.
 - Safety and security, particularly in cases where design of innovative play areas may suggest digressions from current practice (though without contradicting safety requirements or legislation).
 - Inclusivity and the need to address the diverse needs of all children and young people and promote social cohesion, by including both boys and girls, children with disabilities and those from minority ethnic communities.

4 Applying the Benchmark Standards

‘This guide is not prescriptive as to quantity of space. It is recommended that the vision and aims contained in the Play Policy should inform the strategy and therefore the minimum standard of provision for each community. This in turn should be informed by local need and aspirations... It is anticipated that the development of regional standards for play will assist in the benchmarking of local provision and development of local action plans for improvement’.

Mayor’s Guide to Preparing Play Strategies, 2005

Introduction to Benchmark Standards

- 4.1 The Mayor’s Guide to Preparing Play Strategies highlights the need to develop minimum standards for play provision locally with an emphasis on quality and accessibility. This reflects Government policy guidance on recreation and open space (PPG17) which recognises that it is important to modify standards to reflect local need, identifying that consultation on children’s play needs and consideration of the socio-economic context of an area will enable boroughs to adapt measures accordingly.
- 4.2 The development of regional benchmark standards is intended to provide additional guidance to London boroughs and to assist in the benchmarking of local provision and development of local standards and strategies for the provision and improvement of play and informal recreation facilities. The benchmark standards may need to be modified to reflect local circumstances, in the light of consultation on children’s play needs, priorities identified in the play strategy and the socio-economic context of the area. The objective of providing safe and attractive play spaces for all children and young people within walking distance of their homes is dependent on the application of these standards within the context of the overall play strategy and local characteristics and a comprehensive approach to understanding local needs, aspirations and opportunities.
- 4.3 The objective of the benchmark standards is to require that the planning for play and informal recreation provision ensures that new and improved provision is maximised, the needs of the existing population and needs arising from new development are adequately addressed and a consistent level of provision is provided for all.
- 4.4 Standards for play provision should be developed and applied as an integral part of the preparation of Play Strategies. *The Mayor’s Guide to Preparing Play Strategies* makes recommendations for producing a play strategy and is designed for use in conjunction with the *Mayor’s Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies*. A staged approach is recommended as set out as follows:

- 1 Preparation and scoping
- 2 Review
- 3 Identifying, mapping and auditing current provision
- 4 Consultation
- 5 Analysis and identification of objectives
- 6 Preparation of the strategy and action plan

4.5 Benchmark Standards can be applied to understand the extent to which the needs of children and young people living in an area are currently met (Stage 3) and to establish the requirement for new provision to meet the needs arising from new residential developments (Stage 5). The approach to assessing requirements for play provision set out in this section combines minimum standards relating to quantity, accessibility and quality and provides guidance on how these can be applied at the local level. It takes into account local variations including:

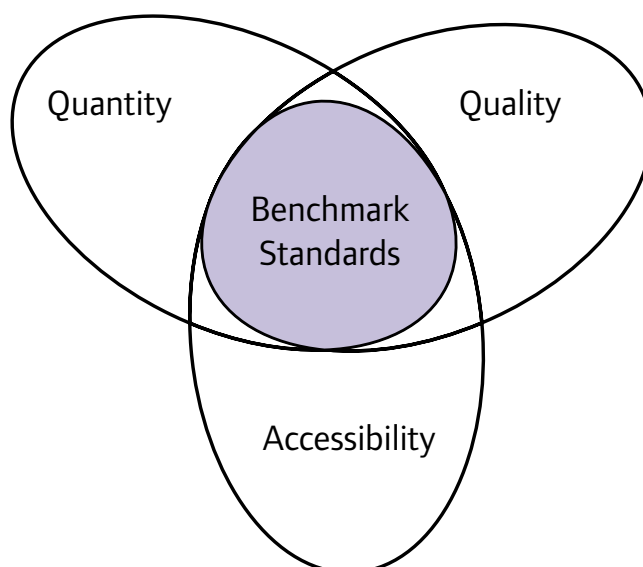
- Demographic profiles
- Socio-economic and multiple deprivation indicators
- Characteristics of development
- Accessibility
- Quality and range of functions and potential for multi-functional areas
- Relationship to Open Space hierarchy and how to address other spaces used by children/young people
- Opportunities for enhancement/new provision
- Safety and security

Recommended Steps in the Application of Benchmark Standards

4.6 The benchmark standards apply to assessing the needs of the existing population and the needs arising from new development and address the following key elements of play provision:

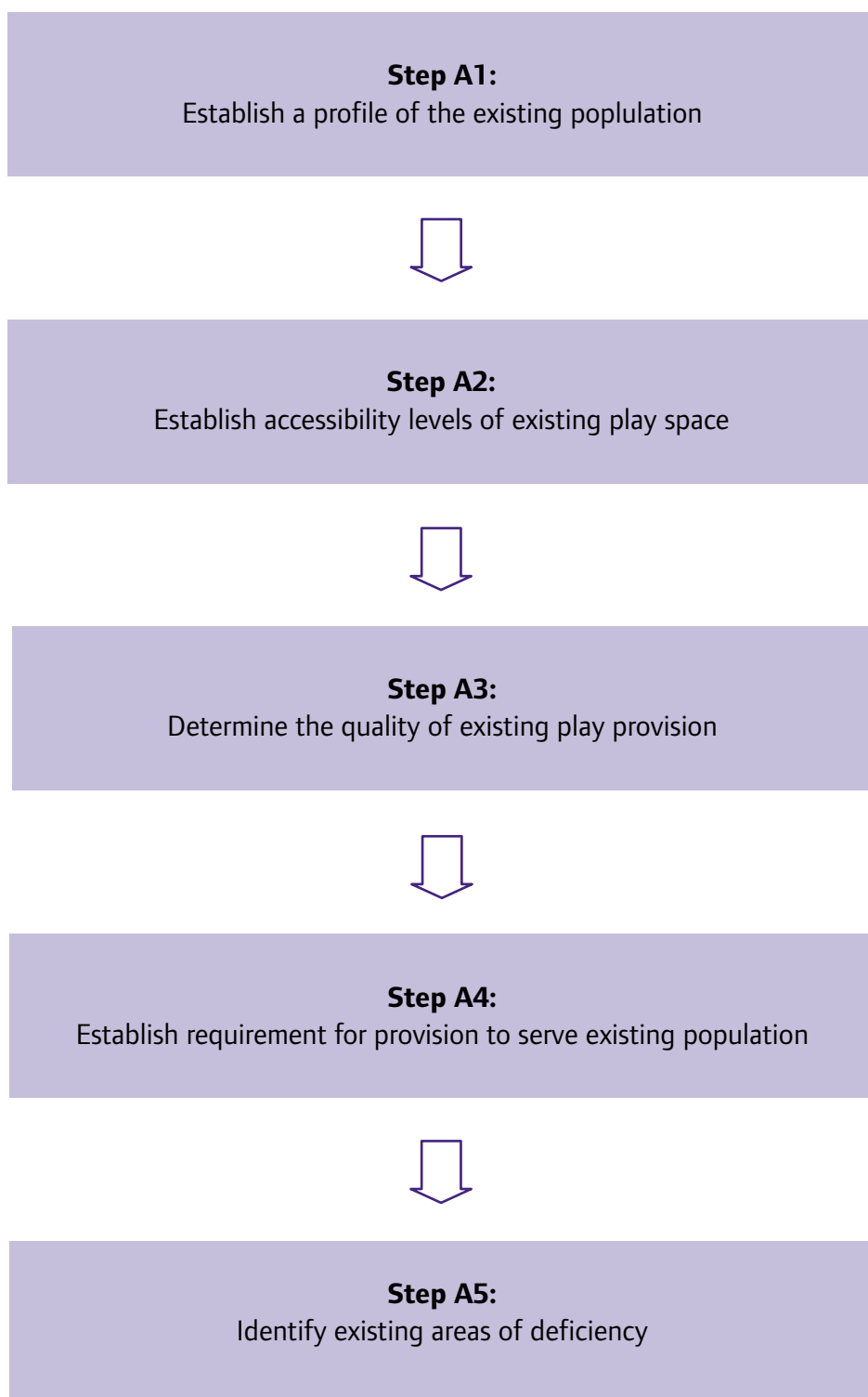
- The *Quantitative* requirement for play provision
- *Accessibility* to play provision
- The *Quality* of play provision

Figure 4.1 Key elements of the Benchmark Standards



A Identifying, Mapping and Auditing Current Provision (Play Strategy Stage 3)

- 4.7 A series of steps is proposed in the application of the benchmark standards in assessing the needs of the existing population. These are set out in Figure 4.2 and relate to Stages 3 and 5 in the preparation of a Play Strategy. Steps 1-5 relate to the audit of existing provision (Stage 3) and steps are recommended as part of the analysis and identification of objectives (Stage 5) and as a tool to assist in pre-application negotiations and the determination of planning applications.

Figure 4.2 Assessing the existing population and provision

Step A1: What is the Population Profile?

- 4.8 The assessment of the play requirements of the existing population and the potential impact of new development is an essential prerequisite of preparing a play strategy. In order to do this, it will be necessary to understand the population characteristics of the area and the relationship of the play strategy to other strategies and corporate objectives. The characteristics of the borough's population must be fully understood before the aims and objectives of the Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies can be effectively addressed and they will also inform the priority to be given to the different parts of the strategy.
- 4.9 A profile of the borough should be prepared building on existing data sources to provide an up-to-date picture of the local area and should be examined by output areas or a ward basis. The list below illustrates the type of information that should be considered.
- Population distribution and age structure
 - Proportion of children in different age bands
 - Poverty, deprivation and polarisation including indices of multiple deprivation such as child poverty
- 4.10 Based on the GLA's population projections, it will be possible to chart projected population changes. It will be useful to show this information on a series of maps and GIS will allow land and population data to be easily linked, recorded and analysed. This will assist in defining areas of particular need and in assessing these characteristics against the distribution of open space.
- 4.11 There are significant variations in the population profile of different parts of London. Understanding local needs for play will involve estimating the number and proportion of children in different age bands. This will be a key step in understanding the nature of local needs in the early stages of preparation of the play strategy.
- 4.12 The age bands of under-5s, 5-11 and 12+ have been selected to ensure consistency between the application of benchmark standards and the assessment of needs and the approach adopted in the assessment of educational requirements. It is recognised, however, that there will be a range of needs within these age bands and that provision will be required to reflect the needs of all ages. This will require flexibility in design and multi-use of play areas to meet the needs of different ages.

- 4.13 It will be necessary to plan for changing demographics over time and to consider the need of both boys and girls (particularly for teenagers) and different cultural requirements.

Step A2: How accessible is existing play space?

- 4.14 Distance is a key barrier to children’s play. All children and young people should have access to play space within reasonable and safe walking distance of their homes. Distance can be a useful tool in helping to identify deficiencies in provision but it will also be necessary to identify any barriers to children accessing those areas (e.g. roads) within the recommended distance and to make allowance for these in assessing access to existing facilities. Distance should be measured as actual walking distance taking into account barriers to movement. The following benchmark standards are recommended in respect of different age bands, and are consistent with the emerging standards in the Children’s Play Council (Play England) Performance Indicators.

Table 4.1 Accessibility to Play Space (Existing Provision)

	Maximum Actual Walking distance from residential unit (taking into account barriers)
Under 5s	100 m
5-11 year olds	400 m
12 +	800 m

- 4.15 The preparation of a play strategy will involve an audit of current play provision. *The Mayor’s Guide to Preparing Play Strategies* provides guidance on undertaking audits of children’s play space. In deciding what play spaces to include in the audit, consideration should be given to the range of spaces within the agreed scope of the strategy. As a minimum, audits should assess areas where play is intended to be at least one of the main functions of the space. The dedicated play spaces included in the audit should be free and accessible and provide unrestricted opportunities for play and informal recreation for children and young people. In undertaking the audit, spaces that are genuinely playable can be counted even if they are multi-functional and have other uses. However, categories of open space provision that are not playable should not be counted (Please refer to section 3.28 for guidance on ‘playable’ spaces).

Step A3: What is the quality of existing play provision?

- 4.16 Following an assessment of quantitative requirements and accessibility to existing provision, it should now be clear whether there is a deficiency in existing play provision in the area. The next stage is to understand in more detail the quality of existing provision in order to assist the integration of decision making, including improvements to existing play spaces.
- 4.17 Work is ongoing at the national level on developing a methodology and approach to assessing the quality of play spaces. Play England has been funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Housing Corporation to develop performance indicators for play spaces. The purpose of the indicators is to support management and improve performance. It is intended that the indicators will have potential for use within the culture block of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The National Playing Fields Association (Fields in Trust) is also undertaking a comprehensive review of its Six Acre Standard, including the qualitative elements. Local authorities will be in a better position to develop their approach to assessing play space quality once these two pieces of work have been completed and the outcomes should be kept under review. In the interim, equipped play areas should be assessed for quality and play value and meet a minimum quality and value benchmark standard. *The Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies (2005)* sets out a methodology and approach to assessing the quality of play spaces. This should be done by assessing the 'playability' of spaces through a site visit, ideally at a time when children are more likely to be out of doors. The basis of this assessment will vary according to local practice, but should include consideration of the following:
- provision of a range of play activities and experiences for different age groups
 - the number and types of items of equipment
 - fitness for use and condition of existing facilities and equipment
 - popularity and levels of existing use
 - social, cultural, economic and physical barriers to access
 - equality and inclusiveness
- 4.18 Deficiencies in the quality of existing provision should be identified. This should be measured against the adopted qualitative guidelines. A list of improvements that are required to meet the standards should be compiled for each site feeding into the production of management and action plans as part of the play strategy. New or improved play facilities should aim to provide a high quality of design.

- 4.19 The play strategy should identify how investment in existing play spaces is to be prioritised. The application of benchmark standards for quantity, accessibility and quality will help target resources effectively.

Step A4: How much space is required to serve the needs of the existing population?

- 4.20 It will be necessary to assess how much play space is required to meet existing needs. However, many London boroughs (particularly in Inner London) anticipate being in a position of constant deficiency of open space. The audit of play space undertaken as part of the play strategy will establish the level and distribution of existing provision. The application of a quantitative standard must therefore take into account local conditions.
- 4.21 Existing national standards are too high for application in London and do not take into account the potential for other areas of open space to be used as play spaces. Consultation with London boroughs indicates that limited practical use is currently being made of existing standards because they do not accurately assess local needs or reflect local characteristics in terms of population profile and existing provision. A more realistic figure should therefore be established as a benchmark standard. **A benchmark standard of a minimum of 10 sq m of dedicated playspace per child is recommended as a basis for assessing existing provision.** In the light of consultation with London boroughs and research on the application of standards elsewhere, this is considered to be a realistic standard to aspire to and is capable of being achieved. This standard is intended to offer a basis for assessing existing provision within an area and to benchmark provision against other areas. The standard for play provision is *in addition to* other quantitative standards for open space provision applied in the preparation of the open space strategy, although opportunities for the multifunctional use of open space should be optimised.
- 4.22 The benchmark standard will be applied to the number of children within different age bands in the population to establish an overall requirement. This will be assessed against the level and type of existing play provision in the area to establish whether there is an overall deficiency or deficiency of particular types of provision. There will be flexibility in the application of the benchmark standard at the local level to reflect local needs and the objectives set out in the play strategy and to respond to changes over time.

Step A5: Are there existing areas of deficiency?

- 4.23 Existing play spaces should be identified for the three age bands in the play strategy and catchment areas established by the application of accessibility thresholds. Barriers to movement such as busy roads and rail lines should limit the catchment area and provide its edge. This will identify areas of deficiency where children and young people do not have access to existing facilities within a reasonable distance from their homes. This should be done through the application of GIS and Statistics Programme for Social Science (SPSS) using the criteria and accessibility standards set out in the following table. Table 4.2 also identifies examples of the types of facility that are appropriate for these age groups.

Table 4.2 Assessing Areas of Deficiency

	Children under 5	Children 5 – 11	Young people 12+
What counts as an existing space for play?	Small age appropriate equipped Play area Public open spaces with potential for informal play	Equipped age-appropriate play area Public open spaces with potential for informal play Kickabout areas Adventure playgrounds Skatepark, bike park or other wheeled facility	Adventure Playgrounds Sport or recreation space that is open access (e.g. ball court, basketball court, multi-use games area) Skatepark, bike park or other wheeled facility Fitness trails or other age-appropriate equipped areas
Maximum Actual Walking Distance (taking into account barriers to movement)	100 m	400 m	800 m

- 4.24 The requirement for new play provision to meet the needs of children and young people in areas of deficiency should be identified in the play strategy. The play strategy should highlight opportunities for meeting this requirement.
- 4.25 In developing the borough’s open space strategy, it will also be necessary to identify how to address the Mayor’s commitment to improving access to wildlife and natural green space. The Mayor has identified “Areas of Deficiency” (AoDs) in access to nature and produced guidance “Improving Londoners’ Access to Nature” – a London Plan Implementation Report. The relationship and overlap between AoDs in access to nature and areas of deficiency in play provision should be identified. This will have implications

for the location and character of future play provision to address existing deficiencies.

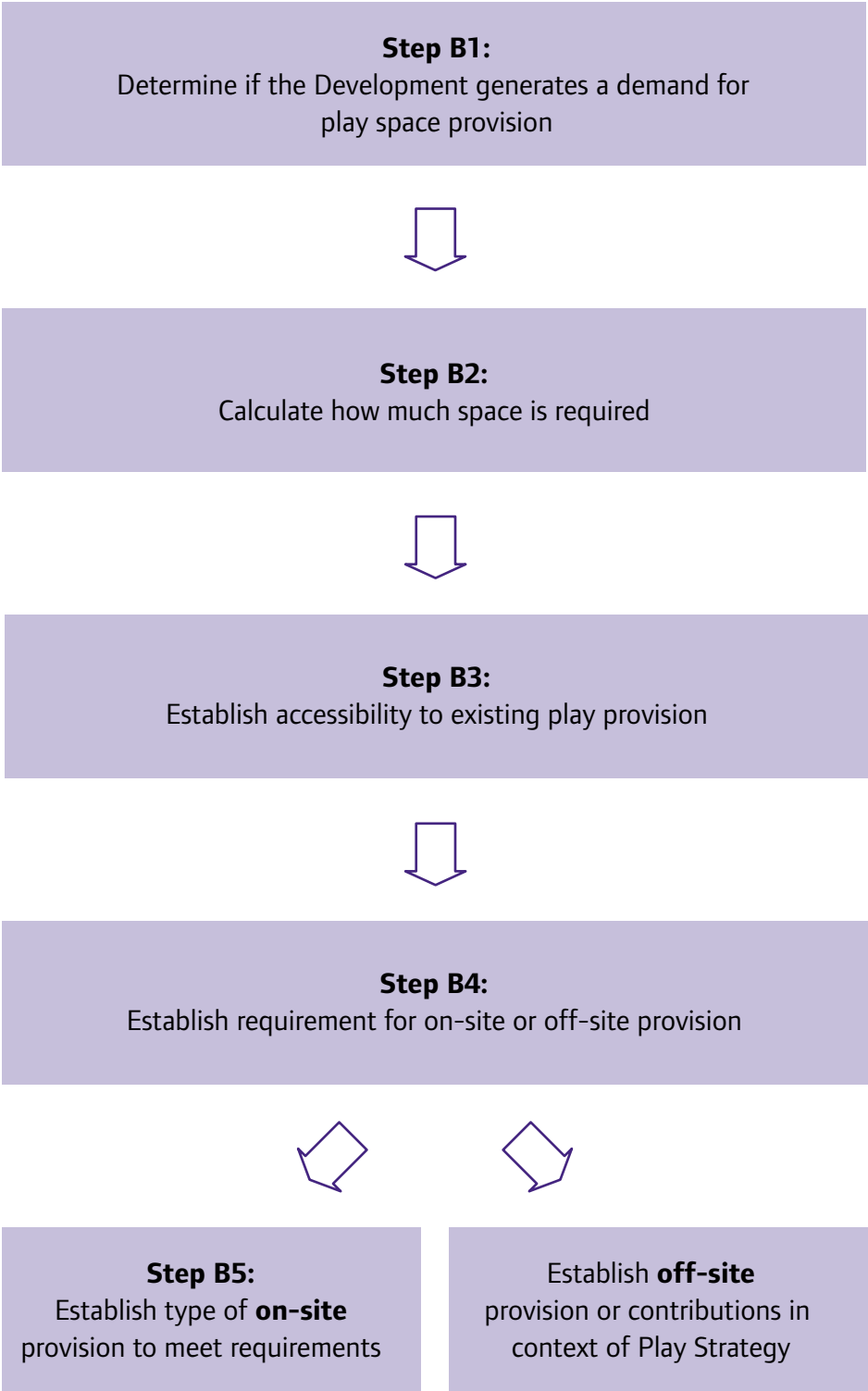
B Analysis and Identification of Objectives (Play Strategy Stage 5)

- 4.26 The steps in assessing the requirement for new play provision to meet the needs arising from new development are set out in Figure 4.3. This approach can assist planners in pre-application negotiations and in determining planning applications for new development.

Step B1: What is the requirement for new play space provision to meet future needs?

- 4.27 In assessing future requirements for play provision, it will be necessary to consider the requirements arising from:
- existing deficiencies and forecast future needs taking into account the future projected growth in the child population
 - requirements arising from new development in the area.
- 4.28 Preparation of the play strategy must be based on an understanding of future needs in the area. This will require an assessment of the needs arising from new development and an early understanding of how these needs can be met in the area. This will assist in the preparation of local development frameworks and area action plans and inform the preparation of development proposals at an early stage.
- 4.29 Traditionally standards have been applied to the overall population (including children and adults) in order to establish the need for play space. This is unlikely to reflect needs accurately. It is therefore recommended that benchmark standards should be applied to the forecast child population of the area. **The benchmark standard of a minimum of 10 sq m per child regardless of age is recommended as a basis for assessing future requirements arising from an increase in the child population of the area.** In the light of consultation with London boroughs and research on the application of standards elsewhere, this is considered to be a realistic standard to aspire to and of what is capable of being achieved. It is intended to provide a basis for assessing existing provision within an area and to benchmark provision against other areas. The standard for play provision is *in addition to* other quantitative standards for open space provision applied in the preparation of the open space strategy.

Figure 4.3: Assessing the needs arising from new development



- 4.30 The play strategy will be required to set out guidelines for new play provision. The benchmark standard of 10 sq m per child should also be applied in assessing the play requirements arising from new developments in the area unless there is the opportunity to access existing provision. In assessing future requirements for play provision arising from new development, it is recommended that benchmark standards should be applied to the anticipated child occupancy of new development. In applying the benchmark standard of 10 sq m per child to new development, it will be necessary in the first instance to estimate the number of children who are likely to live in the new development. This will give a more effective measure of need and to reflect variations in population characteristics and the mix of housing types and tenures.
- 4.31 The play strategy should establish that **all developments with an estimated child occupancy of ten children or more should seek to make appropriate play provision to meet the needs arising from the development.** Where very large residential developments are proposed, the surrounding local context as well as the possibility of creating multifunctional areas should be specifically addressed in calculating the appropriate provision. Developments with an estimated child occupancy of fewer than 10 children should also be required to make an appropriate financial contribution to play provision within the vicinity of the development.

Step B2: How much space is required?

- 4.32 The recommended approach to assessing the level of play provision required to meet the needs arising from new development is based on the application of child occupancy rates. The use of child occupancy is already an established planning tool in assessing the impact of new development on education services and a range of alternative methodologies have been used to understand the child occupancy impacts of development projects. The methods used in assessing education and health requirements should also be applied in assessing the need for play provision arising from new development. This will ensure a consistency and clarity of approach at the local level.
- 4.33 Child occupancy will vary with the type of accommodation and in terms of dwelling size (usually measured as the number of bedrooms) and tenure. It will also vary by locality, index of multiple deprivation and by the ages of the children. Census data confirms, for example, that private flats have fewer children and these children are weighted towards young children and babies.

- 4.34 Child occupancy factors should relate to new accommodation and incorporate tenure, dwelling type, size of the accommodation in terms of number of bedrooms and the ages of the children. Child occupancy should be distinguished according to size of dwelling (in terms of numbers of dwellings), type (houses or flats) and tenure (social rented, intermediate or private).
- 4.35 The Data Management and Analysis Group (DMAG) at the GLA can provide advice to boroughs on the analysis of child occupancy from new development. It is recommended that due to the importance of child occupancy factors, boroughs should regularly collect data relating to the initial occupancy of new dwellings particularly in new developments on large sites where the active involvement of developers should be encouraged.
- 4.36 The DMAG briefing paper on child yield (DMAG Briefing 2005/25 August 2005) sets out different approaches to the calculation of child yield. This briefing paper surveyed recent data to update previous analysis on child occupancy in new properties by the London research centre that had used data from the 1991 Labour Force Survey. New dwellings survey data from Wandsworth and Oxfordshire were presented alongside data from the 2002 London Household Survey. The DMAG Demography Update entitled Child Occupancy of New Social Housing (2006/11 May 2006) aims to create revised child yield formula for determining play space together with additional education and health service requirements in social housing developments.
- 4.37 Where development is itself taking place on land that has previously been used by children for play, proposals should take into account the need for compensatory improvements on top of any need arising from the expected increase in child population.
- 4.38 The **benchmark standard of a minimum of 10 sq m per child** should be applied to establish the quantitative requirements for play space provision arising from new developments in the area. This play provision benchmark should be set in the context of the overall open space requirements, and where open space provision is genuinely playable, the open space may count towards the play space provision. This provision, whether included within the open space provision or supplementary to it, should meet the three 'frees': free of charge, places where children are free to come and go, and spaces where children and young people are free to choose their activities.
- 4.39 In assessing the quantum of play space required, consideration should be given to the type of housing proposed and the provision of private

gardens. The requirement for provision of play space for children under the age of five may be discounted in relation to houses with gardens in assessing play requirements. However, regardless of the type of housing proposed and the provision of private gardens, there will be a requirement for the provision of play space for all children over the age of five in accordance with the benchmark standard.

- 4.40
- A worked example of assessing child occupancy and the quantitative requirement for the provision of play space is provided in Appendix B. This example is based on the advice set out in the DMAG Briefing 2005/25: Child Yield and the advice on child occupancy of new social housing set out in DMAG Demography Update (2006/11) and uses the Wandsworth child occupancy data for private housing set out in the DMAG Briefing. In applying the standard to individual schemes, Boroughs should use a locally-agreed child yield methodology.

Step B3: Establishing accessibility to existing play provision

- 4.41
- All children and young people should have access to places for play within reasonable and safe walking distance of new residential developments. The following benchmark standards are recommended in respect of different age bands in determining whether there is accessibility to existing play provision to serve the needs of the existing population and new residents in the area.

Table 4.4 Accessibility to Play Space (future provision)

	Maximum Walking distance from residential unit (taking into account barriers)
Under 5s	100 m
5-11 year olds	400 m
12+	800 m

- 4.42
- Existing places for play and areas of deficiency should be identified for the three age bands in the play strategy within the identified walking distances.
- 4.43
- In areas of deficiency, there will be a requirement for new provision to be made to meet the benchmark standards for accessibility to play provision. The local context needs to be considered in establishing how deficiencies are identified.

Step B4: Where should the new provision be located?

- 4.44 Having established a quantitative requirement for new play space provision and mapped existing play spaces and areas of deficiency, the play strategy will be required to establish where new play provision should be located. It will be necessary to take into account the location of new development and opportunities for new play provision in the area. In the case of new development, this will require consideration to be given to whether new provision should be on or off-site. In assessing the needs arising from new development, it will be important to identify existing play facilities within the identified distance bands. This will determine whether there will be potential for enhancing existing provision to accommodate the additional needs arising from the proposed development as an alternative to new provision.
- 4.45 The Mayor will expect provision to be made on site in new development and regeneration schemes in accordance with Policy 3D.13. Play provision must therefore be considered at an early stage in the preparation of development proposals and masterplans for all sites with child occupancy in excess of ten children. Boroughs should identify in development plans where development will take place and to consider the opportunities this gives rise to for open space and play provision in the preparation of open space and play strategies. This may include the identification of strategic opportunities for new play provision that will serve more than one development particularly in opportunity areas and areas of major change and regeneration.
- 4.46 Whilst the Mayor will expect provision to be made on site, off-site play provision including the creation of new provision, improvement to existing play facilities and any necessary access improvements may be acceptable in accordance with Policy 3D.13 where it can be demonstrated that there are planning constraints and that it fully satisfies the needs of the development whilst continuing to meet the needs of existing residents. If there is existing provision within an acceptable distance of a proposed development, boroughs should consider the option of off-site contributions as an alternative to new provision if this would meet the objectives set out in the play strategy. If there is no existing provision within an acceptable radius of the site, there will be a requirement for on-site provision or for an equivalent off-site provision to be made which satisfies the accessibility standards. This is summarised in Table 4.4. The potential for suitable off-site provision may be particularly relevant in the case of smaller development schemes. Larger development proposals will be expected to make suitable on-site play provision and for this provision to be planned as an integral part of masterplan preparation.

Table 4.5 Provision of Play Space to meet the needs of new development

		Under 5s	5-11	12+
Existing provision	within 100 m	On site or off-site contribution	Off-site contribution	Off-site contribution
	within 100-400m	On-site	On site or off-site contribution	On site or off-site contribution
	within 400-800m	On-site	On-site	On-site or off-site contribution
No existing provision	within 100 m	On-site	Off-site provision	Off-site provision
	within 100-400m	On-site	On-site	On site or off-site provision
	within 400-800m	On-site	On-site	On-site

4.47 The potential for suitable on-site provision to meet the needs arising from the development will be a function of:

- The size of the proposed development and the number of children: how much play space will be required?
- The quantitative requirement for play space generated by the development: is it sufficient to provide a suitable facility to meet the needs of different age groups?
- The potential to meet needs through improvements to existing off-site facilities and the removal of barriers to accessibility to these facilities or the provision of new off-site facilities: is existing provision accessible to the development or have opportunities for new provision been identified in the play strategy?
- The provision of multi-purpose/communal spaces and other spaces such as roof, terrace or indoor spaces where these are safe, convenient and accessible: what is the potential for flexible use of spaces to meet the needs of different age groups?

- 4.48 In meeting the needs for play provision arising from the development, the developer will be expected to consult with the borough council at an early stage on the preparation of an appropriate brief and to include proposals as part of the planning application. This will ensure that the proposals are in accordance with the play strategy. Developers will also be expected to take professional advice in the development of proposals from a landscape architect and play consultant and, if it is a major development referred to the Mayor of London, during pre-application negotiations with GLA officers.
- 4.49 New provision (on and off site) will need to be made in accordance with the play strategy for the area. Section 5 sets out some options for off-site provision. In considering the potential to meet play needs off-site, it will be necessary to consider the nature of existing facilities, current levels of use and capacity and quality of provision. This will be considered in the overall play strategy in accordance with the Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies and opportunities for improvements to existing facilities will be identified in the play strategy document in consultation with the users.

Step B5: What types of Play Space should be provided and how should existing play provision be improved?

- 4.50 The type of provision will be dependent on the needs arising from the development and existing provision in the area. The type of provision to be made on site must be appropriate to the size of the development and characteristics of the surrounding area. Typologies of play spaces and qualitative standards are recommended for incorporation in the play strategy. These should apply to the improvement of existing provision and new provision.
- 4.51 Typologies of play space should be developed by individual boroughs to reflect their local characteristics and facilities and how local children perceive their environment. Planning Policy Guidance 17 sets out a broad typology of open space including play space but this focuses on play areas or playgrounds and does not recognise that other types of space, such as natural greenspace, can be multi-functional, providing opportunities for children and young people's play and informal recreation while also being places that others can enjoy. A new typology of play spaces is therefore proposed based on the advice contained in the *Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies (2005)*. The proposed typology, set out in more detail in Table 4.6, builds on the multifunctional concept of 'playable space' rather than play spaces and defines a hierarchy of play provision:

- **Doorstep playable space:** a place where young children under the age of five can play
- **Local playable space:** a place where children aged up to 11 can play
- **Neighbourhood playable space:** a more extensive place where children aged up to 11 can play, and where there are some facilities for young people over 11.
- **Youth space:** a place where young people aged 12 and above can meet and take part in informal sport-based activities (including 'extreme sports' such as skateboarding or skating) and other informal recreation.

4.52 The age ranges stated in this hierarchy are indicative. They are inclusive, not exclusive: in other words, they set out the broad age range of the main intended user group(s). They do not mean that users of other ages should be excluded. All types of space in the hierarchy are public open spaces where children's active play is a legitimate activity, where the space has a comfortable feel, and where there are familiar playful or recreational features in the space (which may be play equipment, play landscaping or facilities for informal recreation). However, the spaces have different characteristics, space and location requirements. The spaces may be combined, though some form of separation or boundary is desirable between youth spaces and other types of space in the hierarchy. Apart from youth spaces, the spaces in the hierarchy have the potential to be shared, multifunctional spaces, with good design and management. Youth spaces are the exception, because experience shows that young people value space that they can feel some ownership of.

4.53 The creation of incidental playable spaces are dependent on the creative use of the public realm to provide enjoyment and discovery for children and young people for example through the creation of home zones, safe walking and cycling routes, landscaping and public art. This can be achieved through the preparation of a public realm strategy for new development areas. These incidental spaces can make a contribution towards meeting the appropriate standard, particularly on large developments – but should not replace it entirely.



Gorlitzerpark is one of the largest parks in Berlin and has many play spaces for children of all ages. In this space for young children simple elements – blocks, stones, changes of level, sand and water – combine in a small space to create an engaging place to play.

4.54 The proposed typology addresses the potential for multi-functional spaces for different age groups and activities and provides greater flexibility in relation to changing local circumstances and needs. The characteristics of the main categories of playable space are set out in the following table.



This ball court in Bingfield Park, Islington – created in 2005 – provides a facility for young people that makes good use of changes of level to provide seating, while limited use of fencing allows it to blend in well with the surroundings.

Table 4.6 Playable Space Typology

	Doorstep Playable Space	Local Playable Space	Neighbourhood Playable Space	Youth Space
Description	<p>A landscaped space including engaging play features for young children, and places for carers to sit and talk.</p> <p>No formal supervision</p>	<p>A landscaped space with landscaping and equipment so that children aged from birth to 11 can play and be physically active and they and their carers can sit and talk.</p> <p>Flexible use</p> <p>No formal supervision</p>	<p>A varied natural space with secluded and open areas, landscaping and equipment so that children aged from birth to 11 can play and be physically active and they and their carers can sit and talk, with some youth facilities.</p> <p>Flexible use</p> <p>May include youth space</p> <p>May be supervised</p>	<p>Social space for young people aged 12 and over to meet, hang out and take part in informal sport or physical recreational activities.</p> <p>No formal supervision</p>
Minimum Size	100 sq m	300 sq m	500 sq m	200 sq m
Age Group	0-5	0-11	all ages	12+
Examples of Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping • Climbable objects • Fixed equipment • Seating for carers • Sand and water feature (if possible) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping to create natural feel, including changes of level • Equipment integrated into the landscaping, that allows children to swing, slide and climb • Multigames/ball walls • Kick about area • Basketball nets • Seating area away from equipment • Sand (if possible) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping to create natural feel, including changes of level • equipment integrated into the landscaping, that allows children to swing, slide and climb • Seating area away from equipment • Bike, skate and skateboard facilities • Kick about area • Basketball nets • Sand if possible • Hard surface area if possible • Water feature if possible • Shelter plus basketball net, small wheeled facility or climbing wall/boulder for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space and facilities for informal sport or recreation activity (eg: multi ball court, basketball court, climbing walls or boulders, multi-use games area (MUGA), wheeled sports area, skatepark or BMX track, traversing wall, climbing boulders, exercise trails, outdoor exercise equipment). • Seating areas on the edge of the activity space. • Youth Shelter • Landscaping
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential areas including housing estates • Pocket Parks • Public Squares • Home Zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential areas including housing estates • Local Parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger residential areas and housing estates • Local Parks • District Parks • School playgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger residential areas and housing estates • Adjacent to community facilities • Local Parks • District Parks • Town centres

- 4.55 Doorstep playable space suitable for younger children can be accommodated in smaller areas whilst the other types of space will require larger areas. Whilst there will be a presumption in favour of provision being made on site to meet the needs of children and young people, in reality this will be dependent on the size of the development and the extent of play space (as calculated by the application of the quantitative standard) to be provided. If it is demonstrated that provision cannot be made on site, an equivalent contribution will be required to be made to existing or new off-site provision within the distance standards. There is the opportunity to consider variations in the standards in relation to the overall play strategy, existing provision for different age groups and off-site opportunities. These principles are illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Play provision in new developments

No. of children	10 – 29	30 – 49	50 – 79	80+
Size of space required	100-300 sq m	300-500 sq m	500 – 800 sq m	800 sq m +
Facilities for under 5s	On-site doorstep playable space	On site local playable space	On-site local playable space	On-site local or neighbourhood playable space
Facilities for 5-11s	Off-site within 400 m			
Facilities for 12+	Off-site within 800 m	Off-site within 800 m	Off-site within 800 m or on-site subject to size and local circumstances	On-site youth space
Possible variation to reflect existing provision	If area is deficient in play space for 5 – 11s, some on-site facilities should be provided	If area is within 400 m of existing facilities for 5-11s, an off-site contribution may be considered if in accordance with play strategy	If area is deficient in spaces for 12+, some on-site facilities or new off-site provision should be provided within 800 m	If area is within 800 m of existing facilities for 12+, an off-site contribution may be considered if in accordance with play strategy

- 4.56 Following previous steps in the analysis of future requirements for play provision, the type of facilities that are required on and off-site should now be clear. The next stage is to establish in more detail a set of design principles to ensure that the new facilities are of a high quality.
- 4.57 A set of design principles is proposed which should provide the basis for drawing up proposals for new and improved play and informal recreation provision. The following table sets out the design principles for different types of play spaces.

Table 4.8 Design Principles

	Doorstep playable space	Local playable space	Neighbourhood playable space	Youth space
Quality	Landscape architects or designers who have expertise in creating child-friendly public space should design spaces. Designs should be site-specific and reflect the character of the space - its history, geography and/or culture – in order to create a sense of place. Emphasis should be placed on the creation of a high quality child/family friendly environment and associated requirements such as toilets and baby-changing facilities should be considered at the design stage.			
Boundary	This is a barrier between space and street (unless space is in a home zone) and other hazards such as deep open water. In principle, no barriers needed between space and adjacent public space subject to characteristics of surrounding area and potential hazards.			
Location	Not more than 15 m away from, and well overlooked by, residential, educational or retail property; or adjacent to main routes through open space. Linked by established footpath system Integrated into design of development	Not more than 30 m from the frontages of, and well overlooked by, residential, educational or retail property; or within 30 m of main routes through open space. Linked by established footpath system Integrated into design of development Appropriate for locating in parks or larger green spaces		No physical barriers needed, though some may be helpful depending on context. Between 10 and 50 m (depending on context) from the frontages of residential, retail, educational or leisure property, or within 50m of main routes through open space. Avoid locations where noise will cause disturbance
Layout	Sensitive landscape treatment Permeable layout in terms of entry and circulation Access for children with disabilities Sense of enclosure for users	Sensitive landscape treatment Permeable layout in terms of entry and circulation Access for children with disabilities Secluded and more open areas Youth facilities not adjacent to facilities for younger children		Sensitive landscape treatment Permeable layout in terms of entry and circulation Access for children with disabilities
Play Facilities	Range of physical and sensory experiences	Multi-functional equipment Range of physical experiences	Multi-functional equipment Range of physical experiences	Range of facilities- Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs), ball courts, basketball hoops, meeting point/shelter, wheeled activities, climbing walls/boulders
Indicative Minimum maintenance costs	1.5% build costs/annum	1.5% build costs/annum	1.5% build costs/annum	1.5% build costs/annum

Design Principles

- 4.58 The creation and management of good play space will be dependent on the application of qualitative standards when creating new space or improving existing space.

Quality

- 4.59 Layout and design should start with a **clear brief** stating the user groups the space is intended for, management and maintenance arrangements and the key characteristics of the space, including access points and safety issues. The brief should reflect the likely population profile and be shaped by an audit of nearby spaces and facilities.

Boundaries

- 4.60 **Boundaries**, for instance around areas intended for younger children, should normally be created by landscaping and planting. Fencing may limit children's freedom of movement, makes for less flexible use and reinforces the tendency to restrict unnecessarily children's play to specific parts of public spaces. It should be used sparingly and only where needed taking into account the character of the surrounding area and typically where there are nearby busy streets, deep open water or other hazards. Fencing may also be useful in ball courts and pitches where there is limited open space.

Spaces should include **signage** at the access points stating the name of the space—, the organisation responsible for it and contact details. Signs saying 'children may play here' or 'you can play here' may be useful to signal that a space is playable, and that children's play is a legitimate use.

Location

- 4.61 Consideration should be given to the **character** of the area and the nature of existing provision and deficiencies. If new play provision is proposed in Areas of Deficiency for Access to Nature, the design should incorporate higher quality natural landscaped areas. Care should be taken when considering formal play spaces and equipment in a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC), to avoid damaging the valued habitats. In these areas, natural features could provide a valuable play experience.

Layout

- 4.62 **Inclusive access and design** are crucial if spaces are to be enjoyed by disabled as well as non-disabled children and young people. Spaces should allow children and young people with a range of disabilities, including hearing and sight impairment, to play and interact with their non-disabled peers. Appropriate layout and landscaping are crucial; specialized equipment is unlikely to be necessary. It is not sufficient to

focus solely on wheelchair access, as only a very small proportion of children with disabilities are wheelchair users. The Good Practice Guide on Developing Accessible Play Space (ODPM 2003) states:

‘There is no need to focus on impairment specific issues – rather identify the obstacles to play for any child who might wish to access the play space and think about ways to circumvent them. Each child is different – not every piece of equipment needs to be accessible to every child – access to the social experience of play is key’.

Developing Accessible Play Space: A good practice guide (ODPM 2003)

- 4.63 Emphasis should be placed on the creation of a child/family friendly environment and consideration should be given at the design stage to other requirements such as toilets and baby changing facilities where appropriate.
- 4.64 Some **zoning** or differentiation of spaces for different age groups is valuable where there is enough space, and can help to reduce conflicts between users of different ages. But boundaries should be blurred, not rigid, to allow mixed use of spaces and use by family and groups of different ages. Multiple entrances, exits and routes through spaces help to ensure one age group does not dominate.



© Tim Gill

This play space in a park in the centre of Copenhagen was designed using a ‘dragons and castles’ theme.



© Levitt Bernstein

Proposed design for a space in the Pembury Estate, Hackney

- 4.65 Spaces should be designed and managed to allow children the chance to take risks and attempt physically challenging activities, while striking a balance that keeps the risk of serious injury to an acceptable level. **Safety surfacing** should be used only where specified by safety standards regarding fall heights. The type of surfacing should be chosen carefully to offer cost-effective protection, to allow good access by disabled people and to reflect the overall design of the space. Changes in level should be used where possible to minimise drop heights and reduce the need for safety surfacing. Surface treatment should provide an attractive and safe environment and consideration should be given to a variety of materials according to intended use. Surfaces will be required to conform to BSEN 1177: impact absorbing surfaces, safety requirements and test methods.

Play Facilities

- 4.66 The detailed **design** should consider context, equipment and informal landscaping together. It should also take into account the density and character of the area, and requirements for other standards such as Access to Nature. Landscaping and natural features are invaluable in creating spaces that are attractive and maintain interest. Well-designed hard landscaping such as walls and steps can serve many uses, including informal seating, stimuli for physical play and goals and surfaces for ball games. Sand should where possible be included in spaces that are used by younger children, as it offers great potential for creative and constructive play. Fixed equipment provides a focus for some forms of play activity and helps to signify the target users of a space, but should not dominate. As well as physical exercise, playspace should also provide rich, multisensory experiences. Designs should be site-specific, reflecting the character of the space - its history, geography and/or culture - and creating a sense of place.

Procurement

- 4.67 The procurement process should wherever possible use architects, landscape architects and/or urban designers who have experience and expertise in designing spaces for children and young people to ensure the design takes a holistic approach rather than focusing on play equipment, surfacing or fencing. Advice on the selection of designers is set out in the document *Commissioning a Sustainable and Well Designed City: A Guide to Competitive Selection of Architects and Urban Designers* (GLA Architecture and Urbanism Unit, July 2005).

Management and Maintenance

- 4.68 Developers will be required to agree a **management and maintenance** scheme with the local planning authority. The scheme should provide for the maintenance of the play facilities in perpetuity to the agreed standard by the developer or an appropriate agency or the transfer of the facilities to the borough for it to manage with an agreed maintenance sum. Boroughs should seek to maximise the maintenance period secured through a legal agreement and a minimum 15-year period of maintenance is recommended. The scheme should ensure adequate day-to-day upkeep and inspection, and repairs and refurbishment over time. Developers should ensure that spaces are completed within the same timescale as the adjacent housing. In larger, phased developments spaces should be programmed in so they are also completed in phases in parallel with the housing. The developer will be required to cover maintenance costs for the specified period. In the case of facilities that are transferred to the borough to manage, the borough will need to take into account revenue funding for management and maintenance after the expiration of the period specified in the legal agreement in its future budget reviews. The provisions secured under Section 106 agreements must comply with appropriate national planning guidance, including Circular 5/2005.
- 4.69 In all decisions about location and design, the concerns, needs and wishes of children and young people should be given due weight alongside those of parents, residents and other users. The views of adults should not automatically be allowed to override those of children and young people.
- 4.70 These principles are compatible with, and should be applied alongside, relevant standards and legislation, such as the European standards for play equipment and safety surfacing, the Disability Discrimination Act and health and safety legislation.



© Tim Gill

Spa Fields in Islington is a multifunctional public space that has undergone a major refurbishment, designed by Parklife and completed in 2007. The improvements include a relocated ball games area, an informal recreation and meeting place for young people and dispersed, unfenced play facilities, alongside wider landscaping improvements. The refurbishment also involved the pedestrianisation of a street that had previously split the site in two.

Creating a child-friendly environment

4.71 In addition to the provision of play and informal recreation space, it is important to create a more child-friendly built environment. This involves making the whole of the public realm safe, welcoming and enjoyable for children and young people. Streets, pavements, walkways and various forms of public open space have the potential to be treated as incidental spaces for play. Measures appropriate for inclusion in new developments to improve the environment for children and young people include:

- Home zones and other highway measures, such as car parking located away from public play spaces, to create playable space in streets and other public spaces
- Playable street landscaping that includes changes of level, boulders, logs and other engaging features, in order to create incidental play opportunities
- Car share schemes and/or car-free initiatives to reduce car use and make more space available as public open space, different from space for cars
- Pedestrian and cycling routes, including design features like cycle parking and dropped kerbs where appropriate, linking play spaces and

informal recreation areas to housing, schools, shops and other key neighbourhood destinations to promote independent mobility

- Integration of public art as a means of enrichment and animation
- Commissioning of artists and designers to produce work within the general landscape scheme as well as prescribed play spaces



In this home zone in Tufnell Park, Camden, street space outside a primary school has been redesigned to become a social place for children, parents and carers to meet, chat and play.



This home zone in Rijswijk in The Netherlands includes play features in the street.

5 Making it happen

Improving play and informal open space provision

- 5.1 The application of benchmark standards in developing local standards for provision will assist in the development of policies to address deficiencies, enhance existing provision and create new open space. The emphasis should be on the achievement of improvements in both the quantity and quality of play space with a clear emphasis on implementation
- 5.2 This Supplementary Planning Guidance is directed at local authority planners, developers, and a range of consultants (including landscape architects and urban designers) who all have roles in ensuring the implementation of the objectives set out in this guidance. Local authorities have the responsibility of ensuring robust play strategies and establishing the overall context for implementation of the Supplementary Planning Guidance, as well as detailed roles in determining requirements for specific sites. Developers and consultants are largely responsible for the delivery of child-friendly developments and public spaces, and they must ensure adequate size, design and access to new and improved play and informal recreation areas.

Consultation

- 5.3 *The Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies* provides guidance on consultation with children and young people and the wider community. Consultation will be important as a means of informing broad decision making about play provision and of influencing decisions of a more site-specific nature relating to an actual play area. Consultation will also assist in mediating between different interests and establishing play friendly areas where children and young people can enjoy access to play opportunities.
- 5.4 Children and young people should be involved in deciding the design of places for play wherever possible. This will build ownership and help ensure the spaces are shaped by children's needs, wishes and insights into what works and what does not work.
- 5.5 There is a wide range of methods that can be used to engage children and young people and the community in planning, designing, maintaining and managing play spaces. It will be important to adapt the techniques to the needs and aspirations of the different ages, preferences and backgrounds of the children and young people in question.



Cowley Teenage Space on the Cowley Estate in Brixton combines a small football pitch, basketball net, ramp (for bicycles and skating) and two seating/meeting places for young people.

- 5.6 The development and use of local standards will enable priority actions to be established in the play strategy for the improvement of existing facilities. This may include increasing supervised provision, safe routes to play spaces, review of maintenance and replacement schedules and improvements to existing play areas. In some areas, land may not be available for the provision of additional play spaces and alternative approaches to improving the value, quantity and quality of play opportunities should be considered in these circumstances. Innovative approaches should, however, still meet relevant standards, including those for accessibility, quantity and quality and be fit for purpose.
- 5.7 Boroughs should consider more innovative approaches to the creation and enhancement of play spaces. There are a number of examples already in London. At Winton Primary School in Killick St (a part of Islington near Kings Cross which is very short of public open space) new-shared space is being created as part of the refurbishment of a small park and school playground. A kickabout area right outside the school building is now a shared facility. In the day it is part of the school playground, but at evenings and weekends some robust shutters come down, a gate is unlocked and the area is freely open for use by local people.
- 5.8 In addition to outdoor provision, indoor space may be appropriate for some facilities for older children/young people, which could be incorporated into community facilities where appropriate.

- 5.9 In higher density developments, the use of roofs and terraces may be considered as an alternative to ground floor open space where they are large enough. Roof, terrace or indoor spaces should be fit for purpose- safe, convenient and accessible- and meet the space requirements for the number of children of different ages projected to occupy the development.
- 5.10 The Government's Building Schools for the Future programme promotes investment in improved school buildings and facilities as part of the Government's education strategy. The emergence of extended schools has introduced the principle of community use of school premises and facilities outside normal school hours and provides the potential to enhance play provision and recreational facilities for children and young people. Boroughs are encouraged to give full encouragement to the potential opportunities for extended schools to provide new and enhanced play facilities.
- 5.11 Play provision should be considered alongside other open space provision in order to ensure best use of existing open space and where practical shared or dual use of open space and recreational facilities to meet a range of needs. However, whilst multi-use of open space should be encouraged, measures must be taken to minimise conflicts between open space users and to ensure that children and young people have free and unrestricted access to dedicated play space at all times.
- 5.12 The benefits of supervised play should be considered in the preparation of play strategies and in identifying the most appropriate ways of meeting identified needs.
- 5.13 In considering more innovative approaches to play provision, boroughs should give full consideration to the potential to link play provision to other regeneration programmes and funding opportunities such as lottery funding.
- 5.14 The preparation of a play strategy will assist in prioritising capital and revenue spending and facilitate access to a range of external funding sources. Planning conditions and Section 106 agreements attached to planning permissions can be used to secure the provision of play facilities and management and maintenance of these spaces by developers to meet the needs arising from new development schemes. Agreements can be used to secure both capital and revenue funding to provide for the future maintenance of play provision.



Telegraph Hill in Lewisham is a park refurbished in 2004 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It includes an unfenced area of challenging play equipment that fits well with the park's sloping landscape.

New developments

- 5.15 There should be a clear requirement for all new residential developments generating more than 10 children (as determined by the application of child occupancy assessments) to provide suitable play space as part of the development scheme. Developments with estimated child occupancy of fewer than ten children should be required to make an appropriate financial contribution to play provision within the vicinity of the development.
- 5.16 The type of play space to be provided should be determined in relation to the needs of the development, the existing provision for different age groups and types of play in the area and the objectives set out in the play strategy. The general standards set out in Section 4 should be taken into account in designing play and informal open space provision. Facilities to be provided within the development should be provided in accordance with a scheme to be agreed with the planning authority and either;
- will be maintained in perpetuity to the agreed standard by the developer or an appropriate agency;
 - will be transferred to the Borough for it to manage together with an agreed maintenance sum providing for a minimum 15 year period of maintenance. The Borough should take into account revenue funding after the expiration of this period in future budget reviews.

- 5.17 Where it is determined that provision is to be made off-site, the developer should be required to enter into a legal agreement to make an appropriate commuted payment to secure an equivalent level of play provision and future maintenance. The use of the commuted payments will be limited to the provision and maintenance of play facilities and will be determined in relation to the priorities and opportunities identified in the play strategy.
- 5.18 Provision of on-site play and informal recreation facilities for children and young people should be required as an integral part of the masterplan or development proposals for which planning consent is to be sought. It should be planned in from the outset to ensure that potential conflicts are minimised and there is clarity about future location, size and function of facilities.
- 5.19 In phased developments, play provision should be implemented in the early phases of development to ensure that the needs of new residents are met.

Calculation of developer contributions

- 5.20 The provisions secured through Section 106 agreements must comply with appropriate national planning guidance, including Circular 5/2005.
- 5.21 The calculation of developer contributions to secure play provision to serve the needs of new developments will be determined through negotiation between the local planning authority and developer. However, in order to provide greater clarity and guidance, it is recommended that a standard approach be adopted. The following guidance is suggested for the calculation of contributions.

Costs of On-site provision

- 5.22 The emphasis will be on the provision of high quality play space that meets the needs of the development and enhances play provision in the area. The cost of on-site provision will be made up of two elements:
- play space provision: design, layout, landscaping and equipment
 - maintenance, supervision and management
- 5.23 The brief for play provision will be agreed with the local planning authority in accordance with the standards set out in Section 4.

Costs of Off-site provision

- 5.24 The calculation of contributions to secure off-site provision will be calculated through negotiation but must be adequate to ensure that appropriate provision can be implemented. The level of contribution should be no less than the level of contribution that would be made if provision was to be made on-site. However, consideration should also be given to the type of provision which will be required and whether other costs such as land costs may be involved if new play space is to be provided.
- 5.25 Developments with estimated child occupancy of fewer than ten children should be required to make an appropriate financial contribution to play provision within the vicinity of the development. The use of such contributions will be limited to the provision and maintenance of play facilities and will be determined in relation to the priorities and opportunities identified in the play strategy. The use of the contribution will be limited to the provision and maintenance of play facilities and will be determined in relation to the priorities and opportunities identified in the play strategy.
- 5.26 Developer contributions can be used in different ways, both to improve play opportunities off-site and to support the management and development of on-site spaces. Contributions for off-site provision should aim to improve children and young people's free access on a daily basis to play and informal recreational opportunities, rather than more structured leisure or youth activities. Contributions from more than one development within an area may be pooled to improve play provision or to make new provision off-site. Opportunities for the pooling of contributions should be identified in the development plan and play strategy. Consideration should also be given to linking developer contributions with other funding sources and programmes such as regeneration initiatives, European funding, charitable sources and lottery distributors such as the Arts Council, Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Sport England. Options might include:
- refurbishing existing spaces
 - creating new spaces
 - improving access (traffic calming, new or improved footpaths, new entry points etc)
 - carrying out participation work with local children and young people
 - supporting 'friends of' groups
 - contributions to supervised play provision such as on-site play workers, park warden or play ranger schemes
 - supporting festivals and other events

- expanding free, open access provision such as playschemes, adventure playgrounds or youth facilities that are free, easy to access and open on a daily basis.

Monitoring and Review

- 5.27 The play strategy and action plan will need to be kept under regular review in order to be effective. The need for review will depend on whether there are significant changes in funding, legislation, Section 106 opportunities and other strategies. Boroughs which have adopted a play strategy or open space strategy should review these strategy documents in the light of the benchmark standards and any local standards for play provision.



This space is part of Discover in Stratford, a children's charity in the form of a hands-on learning centre for children under eight. There is an entry fee for the centre building, but the outdoor space is free and open to the public during the opening hours of the centre. The centre maintains and safeguards the space, allowing more complex, creative and ambitious play structures while protecting the site against abuse or damage.

Appendix A: Applying the Benchmark Standards for Play and Informal Recreation

A quick reference guide

B.1: Accessibility to Play Space (Existing and Future Provision)

	Actual Walking distance from residential unit (taking into account barriers)
Under 5s	100 m
5-11 year olds	400 m
12 +	800 m

B.2: Quantitative Requirements

A minimum of 10 sq m of dedicated playspace per child (existing and new provision) is recommended as a basis for assessing existing and future provision – subject to verification in the local play strategy.

B.3: Assessing Areas of Deficiency

	Children under 5	Children 5 – 11	Young people 12+
What counts as an existing space for play?	Small age appropriate equipped play area Public open spaces with potential for informal play	Age appropriate equipped play area Public open spaces with potential for informal play Kickabout areas Adventure playgrounds	Adventure Playgrounds Sport or recreation space that is open access (eg ball court, basketball court, multi-use games area Skatepark or bike park Fitness trails
Actual Walking Distance (taking into account barriers to movement)	100 m	400 m	800 m

B.4: Provision of Play Space to meet the needs of new development

		Under 5s	5-11	12+
Existing provision	within 100 m	On site or off-site contribution	Off-site contribution	Off-site contribution
	within 100- 400 m	On-site	On site or off-site contribution	On site or off-site contribution
	within 400-800 m	On-site	On-site	On-site or off-site contribution
No existing provision	within 100 m	On-site	Off-site provision	Off-site provision
	within 100-400 m	On-site	On-site	On site or off-site provision
	within 400-800 m	On-site	On-site	On-site

The potential for suitable on-site provision to meet the needs arising from the development will be a function of:

- The size of the proposed development and the number of children: how much play space will be required?
- The quantitative requirement for play space generated by the development: is it sufficient to provide a suitable facility to meet the needs of different age groups?
- The potential to meet needs through improvements to existing off-site facilities and the removal of barriers to accessibility to these facilities or the provision of new off-site facilities: is existing provision accessible to the development or have opportunities for new provision been identified in the play strategy?
- The provision of multi-purpose/communal spaces and other spaces such as roof, terrace or indoor spaces where these are safe, convenient and accessible: what is the potential for flexible use of spaces to meet the needs of different age groups?

B.5: Playable Space Typology

	Doorstep Playable Space	Local Playable Space	Neighbourhood Playable Space	Youth Space
Description	A landscaped space including engaging play features for young children, and places for carers to sit and talk. No formal supervision	A landscaped space with landscaping and equipment so that children aged from birth to 11 can play and be physically active and they and their carers can sit and talk. Flexible use No formal supervision	A varied natural space with secluded and open areas, landscaping and equipment so that children aged from birth to 11 can play and be physically active and they and their carers can sit and talk, with some youth facilities. Flexible use May include youth space May be supervised	A social space for young people aged 12 and over to meet, hang out and take part in informal sport or physical recreational activities. No formal supervision
Minimum Size	100 sq m	300 sq m	500 sq m	200 sq m
Age Group	0-5	0-11	all ages	12+
Examples of Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscaping Climbable objects Fixed equipment Seating for carers Sand and water feature (if possible) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscaping to create natural feel, including changes of level equipment, integrated into the landscaping, that allows children to swing, slide and climb Multigames/ ball walls Kick about area Basketball nets Seating area away from equipment Sand (if possible) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscaping to create natural feel, including changes of level equipment, integrated into the landscaping, that allows children to swing, slide and climb Seating area away from equipment Bike, skate and skateboard facilities Kick about area Basketball nets Sand if possible Hard surface area if possible Water feature if possible Shelter plus basketball net, small wheeled facility or climbing wall/boulder for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space and facilities for informal sport or recreation activity (eg: multi ball court, basketball court, climbing walls or boulders, multi-use games area (MUGA), wheeled sports area, skatepark or BMX track, traversing wall, climbing boulders, exercise trails, outdoor exercise equipment). Seating areas on the edge of the activity space. Youth Shelter Landscaping
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential areas including housing estates Pocket Parks Public Squares Home Zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential areas including housing estates Local Parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger residential areas and housing estates Local Parks District Parks School playgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger residential areas and housing estates Adjacent to community facilities Local Parks District Parks Town centres

B.6: Play provision in new developments

No. of children	10 – 29	30 – 49	50 – 79	80+
Size of space required	100–300 sq m	300–500 sq m	500 – 800 sq m	800 sq m +
Facilities for under 5s	On-site doorstep playable space	On site local playable space	On-site local playable space	On-site local or neighbourhood playable space
Facilities for 5–11s	Off-site within 400 m			
Facilities for 12+	Off-site within 800 m	Off-site within 800 m	Off-site within 800 m or on-site subject to size and local circumstances	On-site youth space
Possible variation to reflect existing provision	If area is deficient in play space for 5–11s, some on-site facilities should be provided	If area is within 400 m of existing facilities for 5–11s, an off-site contribution may be considered if in accordance with Play Strategy	If area is deficient in spaces for 12+, some on-site facilities or new off-site provision should be provided within 800 m	If area is within 800 m of existing facilities for 12+, an off-site contribution may be considered if in accordance with Play Strategy

B.7: Design Principles

	Doorstep playable space	Local playable space	Neighbourhood playable space	Youth space
Quality	Landscape architects who have expertise in creating child-friendly public space should design spaces. Designs should be site-specific and reflect the character of the space – its history, geography and/or culture – in order to create a sense of place.			
Boundary	A boundary is a barrier between space and street (unless space is in a home zone) and other hazards such as deep open water. No barriers needed between space and adjacent public space.			
Location	Not more than 15 m away from, and well overlooked by, residential, educational or retail property; or adjacent to main routes through open space. Linked by established footpath system	Not more than 30 m from the frontages of, and well overlooked by, residential, educational or retail property; or within 30 m of main routes through open space. Linked by established footpath system	Between 10 and 50 m (depending on context) from the frontages of residential, retail, educational or leisure property, or within 50m of main routes through open space. Avoid locations where noise will cause disturbance	
Layout	Sensitive landscape treatment Permeable layout in terms of entry and circulation Access for children with disabilities Sense of enclosure for users	Sensitive landscape treatment Permeable layout in terms of entry and circulation Access for children with disabilities Secluded and more open areas Youth facilities not adjacent to facilities for younger children	Sensitive landscape treatment Permeable layout in terms of entry and circulation Access for children with disabilities	
Play Facilities	Range of physical experiences	Multi-functional equipment Range of physical experiences	Multi-functional equipment Range of physical experiences	Range of facilities- Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs), ball courts, basketball hoops, meeting point/shelter, wheeled activities, climbing walls/boulders
Indicative Minimum maintenance costs	1.5% build costs/annum	1.5% build costs/annum	1.5% build costs/annum	1.5% build costs/annum

Appendix B: Worked Example of Applying the Quantitative Standards

The following example of assessing child occupancy and play space requirements is based on the Wandsworth child occupancy data for private housing set out in the DMAG Briefing 2005/05. The example is provided for illustrative purposes only and in applying the benchmark standards, boroughs should use a locally-agreed child yield methodology.

How many children will the new development accommodate?

New development of 100 units comprising 20x 1 bedroom flats, 40x 2 bedroom flats and 40x 3 bedroom houses with a tenure mix of 65 per cent private/intermediate and 35 per cent social rented.

- The number of children will equate to the number of units of different sizes and tenures x child yield.
- The child occupancy of the proposed development is calculated as 60.26 children as detailed below.

	No Units	Child yield	Number of Children
Private and Intermediate			
1bf	12	0.11	1.32
2bf	26	0.11	2.86
3bh	26	0.48	12.48
Social Rented			
1bf	8	0.20	1.6
2bf	14	1.00	14.00
3bh	14	2.00	28.00
Total			60.26

The child yield will indicate the proportion of children in each age band generated by new development. This should be applied to the number of children generated by the development to identify how many children there will be within each age band.

	% Total	No Children
Private and Intermediate		
0-4	59	9.83
5-10	27	4.50
11-15	14	2.33
Social rented		
0-4	28	12.20
5-10	42	18.31
11-15	30	13.09
Total		
0-4	39	23.50
5-11	37	22.30
12-16	24	14.46

How much space will be required to meet the needs for play provision arising from the new development

Development of 50 units (65 per cent private/intermediate housing and 35 per cent social rented housing) generating 60.26 children. The need for play space will equate to the number of children x benchmark standard of 10 sq m/child

60.26 children x 10 sq m = 603 sq m play space

Note: This figure may be reduced to make allowance for children under the age of five in houses with gardens.

Appendix C:

Child occupancy of new housing: DMAG briefing 2005/25: Child Yield

The following information from the Data Management Advisory Group at the GLA is provided as guidance on calculation of child occupancy and was updated in the DMAG Demography Update: Child Occupancy of New Social Housing (2006/11 May 2006). It is intended as one example as to how child occupancies from new developments can be determined, and may be useful for local authorities or developers working in areas where there are not agreed standards. In boroughs where existing child occupancy requirements have been developed (for the purpose of calculating education contributions), it is expected that the same child occupancy calculations would be used for determining play and informal recreation requirements.

DMAG Briefing 2005/25: Child Yield, surveyed recent data to update previous analysis on child yield in new properties by the London Research Centre that had used data from the 1991 Labour Force Survey. New dwellings survey data from Wandsworth and Oxfordshire were presented alongside data from the 2002 London Household Survey.

This *Demography Update* aims to create revised child yield formulae specific for determining play space together with additional education and health service requirements in social housing developments.

The data available to this *Update* are:

London and Sub-Regional Strategy Support Studies (SSSS) dataset, 2004 – an analysis of the approximately 500 Council tenants that had moved into their accommodation in the 12 months prior to being interviewed. This shows children by number of bedrooms (1-6). The data refer to all 'new lettings', not just new-build, of which there is very little in Council stock.

Wandsworth New Housing Survey, 2004 – an analysis of children by number of bedrooms (1-5+) in 212 new housing association properties. Children are shown by ages 0-4, 5-10 and 11-15.

Oxfordshire New Housing Survey, 2005 – an analysis of children by number of bedrooms (1-8) in 728 new social housing properties across the county. Data are available by single years of age from 0 to 19.

The SSSS dataset is unreliable for 5 and 6 bedrooms due to small sample size, but provides the following results:

1 bedroom	0.179 children	(0.2)
2 bedrooms	0.954 children	(1.0)
3 bedrooms	2.056 children	(2.0)
4 bedrooms	3.316 children	(3.3)
5 bedrooms		(4.5)
6 bedrooms		(6.0)

The figures in brackets have been taken as the initial occupancy norm for these properties and used in further in this *Update*. Equivalent data for new housing association tenants show similar outcomes for 1 and 2 bedrooms but only 1.6 and 1.8 children in 3 and 4 bedrooms.

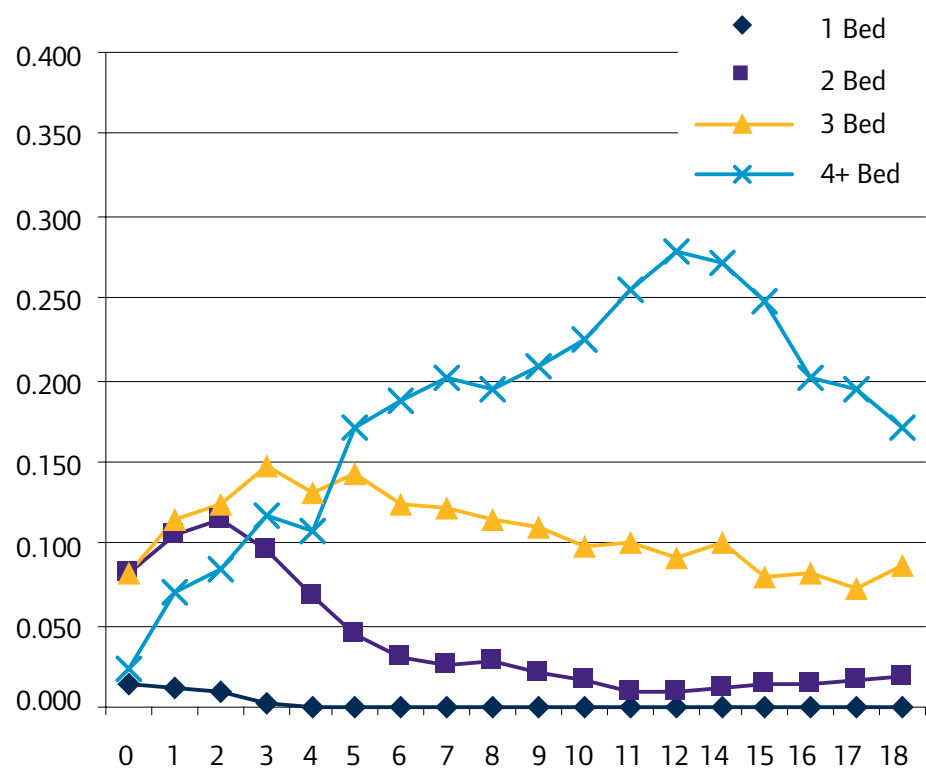
The Wandsworth and Oxfordshire Surveys have been truncated to bedrooms 1 to 4+ due to the small samples of larger properties and show the following numbers of children:

	Bedrooms:			
	1	2	3	4+
Wandsworth (0-15)	0.07	0.40	1.88	1.90
Oxfordshire (0-15)	0.04	0.69	1.76	2.86
Oxfordshire (0-17)	0.05	0.73	1.93	3.21

Both the Surveys show fewer children in all sizes of accommodation compared to the SSSS- based norms, with particularly low numbers in 4+ bedroom properties in Wandsworth. Taking all children under age 18 in Oxfordshire shows a much better fit to the allocations norm, but still with relatively few children in 1-bedroom properties.

In connecting the allocations norm with the survey data links have been made with the Oxfordshire data and include all children under age 18. The age patterns of the child population in social housing in Oxfordshire are shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1 Children by age in new social housing by number of bedrooms, Oxfordshire 2005



The key results of these patterns are that as the bedroom size increases, as well as having more children, the age-structure of the children changes, with relatively more children at all ages over 3 in 3-bedroom properties than in 2-bedrooms. Larger properties are inclined to have more teenagers and fewer pre-school age children, with the 4+ bedroom properties having peak numbers of children at secondary school ages.

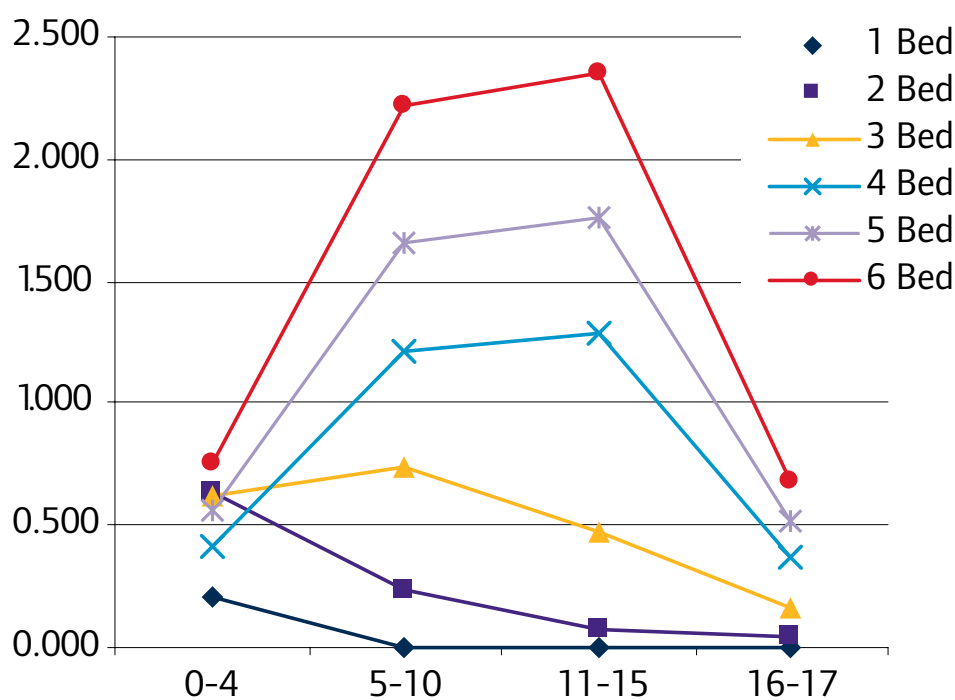
The Oxfordshire data have been linked to the allocations norm, with the single years of age data scaled accordingly, to create new child yield formulae. The age structure for children in 4+ bedrooms have been linked to the separate norms for 4, 5 and 6 bedrooms. The results are as follows:

	Bedrooms:					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age 0-4	0.20	0.64	0.62	0.41	0.57	0.75
Age 5-10	0.00	0.23	0.74	1.22	1.66	2.22
Age 11-15	0.00	0.08	0.47	1.29	1.76	2.35
Age 16-17	0.00	0.05	0.17	0.37	0.51	0.68
Total	0.20	1.00	2.00	3.30	4.50	6.00

These results are illustrated in Chart 2. While the outcomes for 5 and 6 bedroom properties are more speculative there are, in reality, relatively few such lettings available.

These formulae will assist with the development of local play strategies as anticipated in the *Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies (2005)* and in the assessment of play space needs arising from new developments. It will also inform supplementary guidance on standards for children's play and informal recreation (forthcoming, Autumn 2006). The formulae can also be used for planning new education and health provision for children.

Chart 2 Child Occupancy of New Social Housing.



For more information please contact John Hollis, Data Management and Analysis Group, Greater London Authority, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA. Tel: 020 7983 4604 e-mail: john.hollis@london.gov.uk

Copyright © Greater London Authority, 2006

Appendix D: Further Reading

Planning

- The London Plan (consolidated with amendments since 2004) (February 2008)
- ODPM Circular 5/2005 Planning Obligations, 18 July 2005
- Child Yield, GLA DMAG Briefing 2005/15 (GLA, 2005)
- Child Occupation of New Social Housing, GLA DMAG Update 2006/11 (GLA, 2006)
- Improving Londoners' Access to Nature – a London Plan Implementation Report, February (2008)

Play and Children's Wellbeing

- (Forthcoming) Guide to managing risk in play provision (Play England)
- (Forthcoming) Guide to designing play spaces (Play England)
- Mayor's Guide to Preparing Play Strategies (April 2005)
- Mayor's Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies: Best Practice Guide (March, 2004)
- Developing Accessible Play Space: A good practice guide (ODPM, 2003)
- Planning Policy Guidance for Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) (ODPM, July 2002)
- Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing (PPS3) (ODPM, 2006)
- The Children's Action Plan: Building brighter futures, DCSF, December 2007
- Can Play Will Play: Disabled children and access to outdoor playgrounds, John A and Whewey R (NPFA, 2004)
- *Child's Play: Facilitating play on housing estates*. Whewey R and Millward A (1997) London: Chartered Institute of Housing.
- Involving children and young people in the design and care of urban spaces, CABE Space (2003)
- Managing Risk in Play Provision (available from Health and Safety Executive website) Play Safety Forum (2002)
- More Than Swings and Roundabouts: Planning for outdoor play, Children's Play Council (2003)
- Places for Play, PLAYLINK (2004)
- Guide to the European Playground Standards, RoSPA (4th Edition)
- A good place for children? Attracting and retaining families in inner urban mixed income communities, Silverman E, Lupton R and Fenton A (2006)
- The London Childcare Strategy: Towards affordable good quality childcare for all (November 2003)
- Planning for Play: Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy, Big Lottery Fund (2006)
- Seen and Heard, Reclaiming the Public Realm with Children and Young People, Joost et al.
- Six Acre Standard, NPFA (2001)

- Start with the Park: creating sustainable urban green spaces in areas of housing growth and renewal, CABI Space, July 2005
- Stay Safe Action Plan, DCSF, February 2008
- Youth Matters: Next Steps. Something to do, somewhere to go, someone to talk to. DCSF, March 2006
- BS EN 1177: 1998; Impact absorbing playground surfacing. Safety requirements and test methods (1998)

Transport

- London Walking Action Plan, TfL (2004)
- Improving Walkability, TfL (2005)
- London Cycling Action Plan, TfL (2004)
- London Cycle Design Standards, TfL (2005)

Appendix E: Useful Contacts

Children and Young People's
Unit
Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's walk
More London
London SE1 2AA
Tel: 020 7983 4100

Planning Decisions Unit
Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's walk
More London
London SE1 2AA
Tel: 020 7983 4100

CABE Space
1 Kemble St
London WC2B 4 AN
Tel: 020 7070 6700

Design for London
Palestra
197 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8AA
Tel: 020 7593 8360
info@designforlondon.gov.uk

Free Play Network
129 Lancaster Road
New Barnet
Hertfordshire EN4 8AJ
Tel: 020 8440 9276

London Play
83-93 Fonthill Road
London N4 3JH
Tel: 020 7272 2464

National Playing Fields
Association/Fields in Trust
2d Woodstock Studios
36 Woodstock Grove
London W12 8LE
Tel: 020 8735 3380
info@fieldsintrust.org

Play England
8 Wakley St
London EC1V 7QE
Tel: 020 7843 6300

PLAYLINK
72 Albert Palace Mansions
Lurline Gardens
London SW11 4DQ
Tel: 020 7720 2452
infor@playlink.org

Register for Play Inspectors
International
Federation House
Stoneleigh Park
Warwickshire
CV8 2RF
024 76414 999
rprii@playinspectors.com

RoSPA
RoSPA House
Edgbaston Park
353 Bristol Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B5 7ST
Tel: 0121 248 2000
help@rospa.com

Other formats and languages

For a large print, Braille, disc, sign language video or audio-tape version of this document, please contact us at the address below:

Public Liaison Unit

Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Telephone **020 7983 4100**
Minicom **020 7983 4458**
www.london.gov.uk

You will need to supply your name, your postal address and state the format and title of the publication you require.

If you would like a summary of this document in your language, please phone the number or contact us at the address above.

Chinese

如果需要您母語版本的此文件，
請致電以下號碼或與下列地址聯絡

Vietnamese

Nếu bạn muốn có văn bản tài liệu này bằng ngôn ngữ của mình, hãy liên hệ theo số điện thoại hoặc địa chỉ dưới đây.

Greek

Αν θέλετε να αποκτήσετε αντίγραφο του παρόντος εγγράφου στη δική σας γλώσσα, παρακαλείστε να επικοινωνήσετε τηλεφωνικά στον αριθμό αυτό ή ταχυδρομικά στην παρακάτω διεύθυνση.

Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinizde hazırlanmış bir nüshasını edinmek için, lütfen aşağıdaki telefon numarasını arayınız veya adrese başvurunuz.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਰਾਬਤਾ ਕਰੋ:

Hindi

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज की प्रति अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निम्नलिखित नंबर पर फोन करें अथवा नीचे दिये गये पते पर संपर्क करें

Bengali

আপনি যদি আপনার ভাষায় এই দলিলের প্রতিলিপি (কপি) চান, তা হলে নীচের ফোন নম্বরে বা ঠিকানায় অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Urdu

اگر آپ اس دستاویز کی نقل اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم نیچے دیئے گئے نمبر پر فون کریں یا دیئے گئے پتے پر رابطہ کریں

Arabic

إذا أردت نسخة من هذه الوثيقة بلغتك، يرجى الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو مراسلة العنوان أدناه

Gujarati

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી આપેલ નંબર ઉપર ફોન કરો અથવા નીચેના સરનામે સંપર્ક સાધો.

GREATER**LONDON**AUTHORITY

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

www.london.gov.uk
Enquiries **020 7983 4100**
Minicom **020 7983 4458**