

Ms Sophie Bolt comments

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Play England Submission to London Plan Consultation:

Policy S4: inclusion of adventure playgrounds in new developments

Play England welcomes the Mayor of London's Draft London Plan, particularly Policy S4 on Play and Informal Recreation which calls on London Boroughs to:

- undertake audits of existing play and informal recreation provision and opportunities, and assessments of need, considering the quantity, quality and accessibility of provision
- produce strategies on play and informal recreation facilities and opportunities, supported by Development Plan policies, to address identified needs.

Play England would like to see the inclusion of adventure playgrounds in all new developments.

This is because adventure playgrounds offer a unique form of staffed play provision where children can play in ways that they often can't elsewhere. They are challenging but safe places to play because they are staffed by skilled playworkers. Benefits of adventure playgrounds include children and young people's improved physical health, more respite for parents, as well as increased confidence and resilience among users. Adventure playgrounds can offer children – particularly vulnerable children living in areas of high social deprivation – places where they learn for themselves how to deal with risks and build the resilience needed to cope with life's challenges. Because of the unique public service that adventure playgrounds offer, they often become the heart of a neighbourhood community.

Adventure Playgrounds are often 'open access' providers. This means children are free to leave unsupervised. Open access provision seems to be particularly attractive to vulnerable children, perhaps because it is free and easy to access — in contrast with more formal provision. As a result, play providers are often at the frontline of work with more vulnerable families, as they can be the only professionals in contact with children. Open access provision is particularly effective at reaching disadvantaged and socially excluded children who are not accessing more formal provision. For instance, where children have been excluded from school, or the growing number whose parents have been pressured into home educating their children.

Here is more information about the importance of adventure playgrounds and the impact they have on their communities:

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources-list/adventure-playgrounds/>

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/valuing-adventure-playgrounds/>

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Open-access-play-provision.pdf>