



Playground Inspection and Maintenance Policy

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Document Information and Approvals

Policy title: Playground Inspection and Maintenance Policy
Review frequency: Annual
Review due date: 8/12/2026
Service owner: Samantha Whitehead – Interim Assistant Head of Service - Streetcare
Corporate Plan Theme: Effective Council, Safe and Well

Document Approvals

Each revision requires the following approvals:

- Non-administrative updates: Strategic Leadership Team / Environment Committee.
- Administrative updates: Streetcare Management Team

	Title	Date Approved	Signature
Head of Service	Ian Dyer – Head of OS	8/12/2025	<i>HoS signature</i>
Strategic Leadership Team	Victoria Potts – Deputy CEX		<i>CEX signature</i>
Committee	Environment Committee		N/A

Revision History

Version No.	Revision Date	Revisor	Previous Version	Description of Revision
1	8/12/2025	Samantha Whitehead	N/A	

Impact Assessment and Consideration

Assessment Type	Required / Not Required	Date Completed	Impact Assessments and Considerations Comment	Completed By
Finance	Not required	8/12/2025	All inspection, maintenance and repair works arising from this policy will be undertaken within existing approved revenue budget. No additional financial implications arise from the adoption of this policy.	Samantha Whitehead
Legal	Required		This policy ensures that the Council meets its statutory and common law duties in relation to the inspection, maintenance and safety management of playground equipment and associated facilities. It supports compliance with relevant health and safety legislation and recognised industry standards.	Samantha Whitehead
Equality Impact Assessment	Not required	8/12/2025	This policy applies equally to all playground users and does not introduce any changes that would adversely impact any protected group, it promotes inclusive access to safe and well-maintained play facilities.	Samantha Whitehead
Counter-fraud	Not required	8/12/2025	This policy relates to operational safety inspection and maintenance activities and does not introduce any new financial processes or fraud risks beyond existing control arrangements.	Samantha Whitehead
Health and safety	Required	8/12/2025	This policy directly relates to the Council's statutory duties to ensure that playgrounds and associated facilities are inspected, maintained and managed to minimise risk and provide safe environments for public use.	Samantha Whitehead
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required	8/12/2025	This policy does not involve the processing of personal data beyond routine operational records. No personal data is collected, stored or shared as part of playground inspections and maintenance.	Samantha Whitehead
Climate Change	Not required	8/12/2025	This policy supports the ongoing safe management of existing playground infrastructure. It does not result in increased carbon emissions beyond normal operational activity. Where practicable, environmentally responsible materials and practices are encouraged in line with the Council's climate change commitments.	Samantha Whitehead

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy sets out the Council's approach to the inspection, maintenance and management of publicly accessible playgrounds and associated facilities to ensure that they are safe, well-maintained and fit for purpose. It provides a clear framework for routine inspections, reactive maintenance, record keeping and risk management to protect users and minimise the risk of injury.
- 1.2. The Council recognises the importance of play in children's physical, social and emotional development and accepts that play environments may involve an element of risk. This policy adopts a proportionate, risk-based approach to inspection and maintenance that supports safe, challenging play while minimising unacceptable risks.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all playgrounds and items of play equipment owned, managed or maintained by the Council, including associated safety surfacing, fencing, signage and ancillary assets. It covers the arrangements for weekly, quarterly and annual inspections, defect reporting, prioritisation of repairs and decommissioning of unsafe equipment.

3. Key Aims

- 3.1. The key aims of this policy are to:
 - Ensure compliance with relevant health and safety legislation and recognised industry standards.
 - Provide a consistent and proportionate approach to playground inspection and maintenance.
 - Promote public confidence in the safety and quality of Council-managed play provision.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1. The Council is responsible for ensuring that all playgrounds under its ownership or management are inspected and maintained in accordance with this policy, relevant legislation and recognised industry standards. This includes ensuring that appropriate systems are in place for inspection, defect reporting, maintenance and record keeping.
- 4.2. Council officers and appointed contractors are responsible for carrying out inspections, maintenance and repairs in line with this policy, reporting defects promptly, taking appropriate action where risks are identified, and ensuring that accurate records are maintained.

5. Inspections and Maintenance Arrangements

- 5.1. The Council's playground inspection and maintenance regime is based on BS EN1176 (Playground Equipment) and BS EN1177 (Impact Attenuating Surfacing). While these standards do not carry legal status, they represent recognised industry best practice. The Council also follows guidance issued by the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) in relation to inspection, risk assessment and defect response.
- 5.2. This structured approach ensures that playgrounds remain safe, accessible and compliant with expected safety standards.

6. Inspection Regime

- 6.1. The Council operates a structured inspection regime for all playgrounds as set out below:

Inspection Type	Frequency	Performed By	Purpose
Post-Installation	As required	External company installing equipment	Confirm safe installation and undertake risk assessment
Routine Visual	Weekly	Trained staff	Identify obvious hazards
Operational	Quarterly	Senior Environmental Response Officers	Check wear, stability, minor vandalism
Annual (External)	Annually	Independent Certified Inspector (e.g. RoSPA)	Full safety audit and compliance check
Reactive (As Needed)	When triggered by a complaint or incident.	Trained staff	To check reported concern

- 6.2. Inspection frequencies may be adjusted in response to site usage, vandalism trends, environmental factors and risk history.

7. Risk Assessment and Response

- 7.1. All issues identified during inspections are risk rated using RoSPA risk assessment criteria:

Risk Level	Definition	Response Time
Immediate	Severe hazard	Make it safe within 24 hours
High	Serious risk	Make it safe within 48 hours and repair it as soon as practicable (normally within 7-14 days)
Medium	Moderate risk	Schedule or repair as practicable within 7–28 days
Low/Very Low	Minor defect	Monitor, review or repair as practicable within 30–90 days

- 7.2. Where necessary, equipment will be isolated, closed or removed from use until remedial works are completed.

8. Planned Maintenance

- 8.1. Planned maintenance is incorporated within the operational inspection programme and is undertaken in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations and asset condition assessments and relevant safety standards.
- 8.2. Planned maintenance activities will be prioritised using risk assessment outcomes in line with the Council's playground and inspection framework and guidance issued by RoSPA. This ensures that defects are addressed in a proportionate, timely and defensible manner.
- 8.3. Planned works will be programmed to minimise disruption to users and maintain safe access wherever practicable. Planned maintenance may include, but is not limited to:
- Surface repairs and renewal
 - Replacement of worn components
 - Structural repairs
 - Fence, gate and boundary maintenance
 - Refurbishment works to extend asset life

9. Reactive Maintenance

- 9.1. Reactive maintenance is undertaken where issues are identified during inspections or following concerns raised by the public. All reactive maintenance responses will follow the Council's risk-based prioritisation frameworks:
- **Immediate Risk:** Equipment will be made safe immediately or within 24 hours through isolation, removal from use or emergency repair.
 - **High Risk:** Equipment will be made safe within 48 hours, with full repair completed as soon as practicable and normally within 7-14 days.
 - **Medium Risk:** Repairs will be made or scheduled within 7-28 days, depending on severity and operational capacity.
 - **Low/Very Low Risk:** Defects will be monitored, reviewed or repaired within 30-90 days and addressed through the planned maintenance programme where required.
- 9.2. Where equipment cannot be made safe within required timeframes, it will remain isolated or removed from service until appropriate remedial works are completed.
- 9.3. All reactive maintenance actions will be fully recorded within the Council's inspection and maintenance records.

10. Accident and Incident Reporting

- 10.1. All accidents, incidents and near misses relating to playgrounds and play equipment that are reported to the Council will be recorded in accordance with the Council's corporate incident reporting procedures.
- 10.2. Where appropriate incidents will be investigated to identify root causes and any additional control measures required to prevent recurrence.

11. Legal Responsibilities

- 11.1. The Council will comply with all relevant legislation, standards and guidance relating to playground inspection, maintenance and safety, including but not limited to:
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
 - Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 & 1984
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
 - Children Act 1989
 - Equality Act 2010
 - BS EN1176 (Playground Equipment)
 - BS EN1177 (Impact Attenuating Surfacing)
 - RoSPA Guidance
- 11.2. This policy supports the Council in meeting its statutory and common law duties of care to ensure that playgrounds are managed in a safe and responsible manner.

12. Training and Competency

- 12.1. All staff and contractors undertaking playground inspections and maintenance must be appropriately trained to RoSPA standards or an equivalent recognised professional standard.
- 12.2. Training records will be retained and regularly monitored to ensure qualifications remain valid and up to date.

13. Record Keeping

- 13.1. All inspection, maintenance and asset records will be retained for a minimum period of 21 years to support legal defensibility.
- 13.2. Records must be complete, date-stamped, auditable and supported by photographic evidence where appropriate.
- 13.3. Play equipment records will include:
 - Post-installation inspection reports and risk assessments
 - Weekly routine visual inspection reports
 - Quarterly operational inspection and maintenance reports
 - Annual independent inspection reports
 - An up-to-date schedule of playground equipment and assets.

14. Safety Signage

- 14.1. Safety signage must be present and maintained at all playgrounds.
- 14.2. The condition and visibility of safety signage will be reviewed during inspections and recorded and maintained as an asset.

15. Policy Review

- 15.1. This policy will be reviewed annually or following any serious incident, enforcement action or relevant legislative change.
- 15.2. Feedback from inspections, audits and community engagement will be used to inform future revisions of this policy.