



Playgrounds and play equipment policy

Housing Landlord Services

HLSPOL06

Document publish date 01 October 2025

Version number 1.3

Version	Author	Date
1.1	Sophie Tuffin	30/06/2025

Contents

1	Document history.....	3
2	Introduction	4
3	Legislative and regulatory context	5
4	Definitions	7
5	Roles and responsibilities	10
6	Accidents and injury	13
7	Playground inspection methodology	15
8	Appendices	18
Annex 1	Schedule of playparks falling under the responsibility of HRA	19
Annex 2	Process map	20

1 Document history

Name of policy	Playgrounds and Play Equipment Policy
Document ref	HLSPOL06
Purpose of policy	<p>The purpose of this Playground and Play Equipment Policy is to ensure that all play areas and equipment provided by New Forest District Council are safe, inclusive, well maintained, and supportive of children's development encouraging wider community engagement.</p> <p>New Forest District Council is committed to providing an effective maintenance regime for its Playground and Play Equipment in order to comply with statutory responsibilities and health and safety obligations.</p>
Policy applies to	This policy and the subsequent arrangements apply to all directly and indirectly employed housing staff within New Forest District Council and, where appropriate, contractors and members of the public.
Lead officer	Sophie Tuffin – Service Manager
First issued	1 November 2019
Latest update	15 July 2025
Version control	<p>V1.0 1 April 2019</p> <p>V1.1 1 January 2024</p> <p>V1.2 14 June 2024</p> <p>V1.3 30 June 2025</p>
Review period	At least every three years from date of issue or as a result of legislative, organisational change or an incident investigation.
Update overview	June 2025, periodic review, update to structure of service arrangements, roles and responsibilities, updated into new policy template.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This policy details the arrangements for New Forest District Council's play and leisure facilities (Controlled by Housing Services) and the assets within these facilities.
- 2.2 The policy will outline the legal responsibilities of the authority and how the Council will meet these responsibilities through a system of inspection, assessing risk and responses to faults and hazards.
- 2.3 Playgrounds by their very nature should provide a degree of risk and challenges to the users. The policy will therefore summarise the Council's objectives in providing challenging play while identifying an acceptable degree of risk.
- 2.4 The Council will ensure that its maintenance service reflects the following overall principles:-
 - providing maintenance that gives priority to safety;
 - meeting the Council's legal and contractual obligations;
 - ensuring all repairs and inspections meets the performance and quality standards set by the Council;
 - ensuring the services provided are cost effective and obtaining the best value;
 - ensuring the principles of health and safety are central to working procedures and practices;
 - maximising opportunities for resident and community involvement where playgrounds are refurbished.

3 Legislative and regulatory context

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

- 3.1 Requires employers including Councils to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees and the public.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Act 1992

- 3.2 Requires risk assessments and implementation of appropriate safety measures.

Occupiers Liability Act 1957

- 3.3 Places a duty of care on those who control premises to ensure visitors are reasonably safe.

Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

- 3.4 Duty holders must carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments of all playgrounds and equipment which includes identifying hazards such as damaged equipment or unsafe surfacing.

Other Legislation, Approved Codes of Practice and Guidance Notes

- 3.5 Other legislation, approved codes of practice and guidance notes relating to Landlord responsibilities, but which is not exhaustive: -

Legislation

- Equality Act 2010;
- CDM Regulations 2015;
- Consumer Protection Act 1987;
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957/1984;
- Children Act 1989 Emphasises the welfare of children, relevant when designing and maintaining play areas;
- Environmental Protection Act 1990. Covering waste management and environmental hazards in play areas.

Industry Guidance

These Safety Guidelines are not a legal requirement but are considered to be good professional working practice:-

- BS-EN1176 – Playground Equipment;
- BS-EN14974 – Skate Parks;
- BS-EN16630 – Outdoor Fitness Equipment;
- BS-EN15312 – Free Access Multiuse Equipment.

3.6 Contained within the guidance are the following key recommendations:-

- if the equipment is not safe, access by the public should be prevented;
- equipment must be regularly inspected and maintained and inspection records kept.

Civil Legislation

3.7 In the event of a serious accident, claims are based on negligence: that is, the Council responsible for play took or failed to take some action which made the accident more likely to happen or worse than would otherwise have been the case. The defence will be based on evidence such as records of inspections and maintenance, compliance with the Standards and relevant risk assessments.

3.8 This policy sets out the methodology the Council will use in managing and maintaining the playgrounds controlled by Housing Services. The policy will take into account the authority's legal responsibilities and outline a method of inspections and maintenance.

Balancing Risk and Benefits

3.9 The Council's Risk Management Approach aims to provide play spaces that are stimulating and challenging, encouraging children to explore and develop their abilities. In creating these environments, the Council will ensure that potential hazards are carefully managed so that children are not exposed to unacceptable levels of danger.

4 Definitions

The Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII)

- 4.1 Sets the standards for playground inspections. Inspectors must keep records of their inspections, findings, and any actions taken. These records support legal compliance under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 and Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Routine Visual Inspections BS-EN1176 – P7 C6.1B

- 4.2 These inspections are intended to identify obvious hazards that can result from normal use, vandalism, or weather conditions, at the frequency specified by the operator.
- 4.3 Typical hazards can take the form of broken parts or broken bottles. Where playgrounds are subject to heavy use or vandalism, daily inspections can be necessary. Inspectors will be required to visually assess the cleanliness, ground surface finishes and missing parts for example.

The Council will require inspectors to be trained to RPII Routine level.

Operational Inspections BS-EN1176 – P7 C6.1C

- 4.4 Operational Inspections provide a more detailed examination to check the operation and stability of all equipment and surfaces especially for wear.
- 4.5 It is recommended that these inspections should be carried out every 1 to 3 months, or as indicated by the manufacturer's instructions. The frequency of the operational inspections depends on the amount and intensity of use in the area and equipment's durability.
- 4.6 Examples of operational inspection points are cleanliness, equipment ground clearances, ground surface finishes, exposed foundations, sharp edges, missing parts, excessive wear (of moving parts), adequate level of impact attenuation and structural integrity.

The Council will require Inspectors to be trained to RPII Operational Inspector level.

Annual Main Inspection BS-EN1176 – P7 C6.1d

- 4.7 Comprehensive safety assessments of play equipment, foundations, and surfacing will be conducted annually to evaluate overall safety and ensure compliance with BS EN 1176 standards and relevant risk assessments.
- 4.8 These inspections will include:-
- evaluation of safety measures;
 - effects of weather exposure;
 - identification of rot, decay, or corrosion;
 - assessment of any changes in equipment or surface safety following repairs, replacements, or modifications.
- 4.9 Where necessary, excavation may be undertaken to assess below-ground components. If excavation is not feasible, alternative diagnostic methods, such as the resistograph technique may be used to detect internal timber decay. Additional testing may be required to assess structural integrity and surfacing performance, including impact attenuation checks.
- 4.10 Technical support may be sought where components require dismantling for thorough evaluation.
- 4.11 Annual inspections will be carried out by the Council’s insurance inspector, coordinated by the Gas and Electrical Manager with the assistance of the Administrative Officer.
- 4.12 All operational and annual inspections, whether conducted by Council staff or contractors certified to the relevant RPII inspection level will be documented centrally within the Council’s Housing Asset Management Application.

Bespoke Inspections

- 4.13 These assessments will be carried out by a suitably qualified and commissioned provider, as directed by the Gas and Electrical Manager or the Administrative Officer.
- 4.14 Bespoke inspections are typically initiated in response to:-
- enquiries or concerns raised by community members;
 - reported accidents or incidents within a play facility;

- urgent safety concerns requiring immediate attention;
- they may also be used to verify the condition or safety of equipment following repairs, modifications, or environmental impacts.

Inspection

4.15 A visual inspection of a condition to establish whether any remedial works are necessary.

Programmed Works Response

4.16 Response to major items of repair or replacement requiring weather or safety dependent work planning or regulated application approval.

Responsible Person

4.17 The 'Responsible Person' is the Landlord.

5 Roles and responsibilities

- 5.1 The Council will ensure that all Council housing staff are fully aware of their role in meeting the Council's responsibilities as 'Landlord'.

Chief Executive

- 5.2 Responsibility for complying with duties as 'Landlord' rests with the 'responsible person'. The 'responsible person' as Landlord is represented by the Chief Executive together with the Strategic Directors who collectively form the 'Executive Management Team'.

Strategic Director Housing and Communities

- 5.3 The Strategic Director Housing and Communities has overall strategic responsibility for the Council's approach to managing public playparks and play equipment safety, where responsibility and control rests with the Housing Landlord Services. This role is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of supporting Regulations are applied and implemented and that adequate resources are made available to discharge duties.
- 5.4 The Strategic Director Housing and Communities also acts as the registered Lead Officer for health and safety.

Assistant Director - Housing

- 5.5 Nominated Assistant Director to support the Strategic Director Housing and Communities in delivering the Council's approach to public playparks and play equipment safety, where responsibility and control rests with Housing Landlord Services. This role is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of supporting Regulations are applied and implemented and that adequate resources are made available to discharge duties.

Service Manager – Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing

- 5.6 Operational responsibility for the overall effectiveness of the Housing Landlord Services approach to public playparks and play equipment safety.

Housing Service Managers

5.7 Responsible for the delivery of services within their respective areas that impact on the overall effectiveness of the Housing Landlord's approach to public playparks and play equipment safety and will:-

Support and assist the Service Manager for Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing in discharging and undertaking their duties and respond to matters within their respective service areas.

Gas and Electric Manager

5.8 Responsible for leading the periodic inspection regimes for playparks and play equipment, recording of information and actioning necessary repairs or removal of equipment as set out within this policy, supported by Stock Condition Surveyors.

Administrative Officer

5.9 Administrative Officer will support the Gas and Electric Manager in the operational day-to-day delivery of arrangements, inspection scheduling, inspection recording and asset data management set out within this policy.

Stock Condition Surveyors (SCS)

5.10 Housing Stock Condition Surveyors will undertake RPII routine weekly safety inspections to monitor playparks and play equipment for hazards that may cause injury. SCS's are designated to report, remove, or cordon off any immediate risk hazards and provide written reports of each inspection. SCS's will support the compliance of this policy and report any non-compliance to the Gas and Electric Manager.

Corporate Health and Safety Team

5.11 Responsible for guidance and advice in respect of health and safety to all Council owned housing and will:-

- Conduct audits to ensure that the provisions within this Policy are being enforced to the standard required;

- Investigate accidents and near miss incidents and introduce controls to reduce the risk of such incidents recurring, to reduce financial loss and to improve overall adherence to health and safety legislation.

Employees

5.12 All employees of New Forest District Council, irrespective of their position, has a responsibility for safety and will:-

- Take reasonable care for their own Health and Safety and that of other persons who may be adversely affected by activities relating to the repair and maintenance of the Council's assets including members of the public, tenants, visitors, and contractors;
- Co-operate with the Council and its managers to enable compliance with this policy and the legal duties it holds;
- Remove or reduce hazards that, in their opinion, may present a serious risk to health, of themselves or others;
- Report hazards that have been removed or that may present a serious risk to users;
- Report concerns where vulnerable residents may be at additional risk.

6 Accidents and injury

- 6.1 The Council will record all accidents notified to it and enquiries relating to the play areas, equipment and facilities within them. The details of the enquiry, complaint or accident will (alongside usual accident reporting procedures) be recorded within the same system used for issuing and recording inspections.
- 6.2 Recording incidents in this manner will enable the authority to illustrate a clear chain of information from the inspection, the associated risk, details of works and repairs carried out and any information related to an accident or enquiry. This information will enable the authority to defend itself against claims and be an effective management tool for future improvements.

BS EN 1176 - 8.2.4 Operational procedures

- 6.3 Until unsafe equipment or surfacing is repaired and released for use, access by the public shall be prevented.
- 6.4 Information about accidents brought to the attention of the Council should be recorded and includes the following details:-
- date and time of accident;
 - age and gender of victim and clothing worn, including footwear;
 - equipment and/or surfacing involved;
 - number of children on site at the time of the accident;
 - description of accident;
 - injury sustained including part(s) of body affected;
 - action taken to the injured party;
 - witness statements;
 - any subsequent equipment modification;
 - weather conditions; and
 - any other relevant information.

- 6.5 Near miss or accident reports MUST be formally recorded via the Council's Corporate Health and Safety records management system via online form: **Microsoft Forms (office.com)** and all reported accidents MUST be notified to the Council's Insurance Risk Officer.
- 6.6 This information shall be used to improve the safety of playgrounds and be retained for reference purposes and to facilitate the defence of personal injury claims.

7 Playground inspection methodology

- 7.1 The Council’s Housing Landlord Service will adhere to the guidance set out in this document. The responsibility for the regular inspection of the play and play equipment under the Council’s Housing Landlord Services responsibility will be carried out weekly by trained Stock Condition Surveyors and quarterly by a suitably qualified commissioned provider.
- 7.2 This section of the policy will identify the Council’s methodology in managing the authority’s assets following:-
- Inspection Frequency and Type;
 - Inspection Type Definitions;
 - Assessing the Level of Risk;
 - Summary of Risks.

Inspection frequency & type

- 7.3 The table below details the frequency of inspections and the inspectorate responsible for carrying out the on-site inspections.

FREQUENCY OF INSPECTION	INSPECTION TYPE	INSPECTOR
Weekly	Routine Visual (RPII Routine Inspector)	Stock Condition Surveyor
1-3 Months	Operational (RPII Operational Inspector)	Suitably qualified third party, commissioned provider
Annual	Annual (RPII Outdoor Annual Inspector)	Third party risk management and insurance services provider or RPII Outdoor Annual Inspector

Bespoke	Reactive	Suitability qualified commissioned provider (at the request of the Service Manager – Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing
---------	----------	---

Developing the planned maintenance programme

7.4 The Council will use the following gathered from yearly inspections and from its Stock Condition Surveyors to plan future refurbishments of play parks and associated equipment.

7.5 This will be based on:-

- safety and compliance;
- condition of play parks;
- expected component life;
- community needs and inclusivity;
- environmental and site conditions.

Reporting of repairs

7.6 Repairs or maintenance issues identified will be addressed in accordance with the Council HLSPOL05 Maintenance and Repairs Policy.

7.7 For Council Officers or members of the general public, repairs and hazards can be reported directly to the Housing Hub:-

- During office hours, by calling (023) 8028 5222. The Housing Support Hub is open on Monday to Thursday between 8.30am and 5.15pm, and on Friday between 8.30am and 16.45pm;
- Outside office hours by calling (023) 8028 5250 or 07771 259098;
- by email (housing.supporthub@nfdc.gov.uk);
- by Web Chat **New Forest District Council - New Forest District Council** Housing Repairs and Maintenance.
- via any council employee or representative.

Enabling community choice

- 7.8 Where the Council undertakes full replacement of playparks, a process of community consultation will be carried out prior to installation to ensure that the new provision meets the identified needs of the local community.

Quality control

- 7.9 Should there be dissatisfaction with any of the Councils playparks or playground equipment.
- 7.10 The Council's **Corporate Complaint Procedure** is available to anyone who is dissatisfied with the maintenance provided.

Risk implications

- 7.11 The failure to effectively repair the Councils playgrounds and play equipment, would have a negative impact upon the reputation and image of the Council, within our communities leading in turn to a loss of public confidence.

Financial implications

- 7.12 An annual servicing and repairs budget is required to implement and support this policy. This is agreed as part of the Council's annual budget setting process.

8 Appendices

Annex 1 **Schedule of playparks falling under the responsibility of the HRA**

Annex 2 **Process map**

Annex 1 Schedule of playparks falling under the responsibility of HRA

DESCRIPTION	ROAD	TOWN
Play Area, next to Nedderman Centre	Heather Road	Fawley
Play Area	Marryat Road	New Milton
Play Area	Marryat Road	New Milton
Play Area	Bligh Close	New Milton
Play Area	Drake Close	New Milton
Play Area	Howe Close	New Milton
Play Area	Stocklands	Totton
Play Area	Moor Close	New Milton

Annex 2 Process map

