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## Playgrounds Safe Working Practices

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The Health and Safety at Work Act places a duty on the Council to ensure that all leisure equipment provided for adults and young people is safe for their use at all times. Responsibility for the safety of playgrounds rests with the Director of Environment Services.

Regular inspections must be conducted by competent staff as often as practicable. Daily, weekly and monthly maintenance inspections should be arranged and records of such inspections maintained in readily accessible log books.

Routine technical inspections must be conducted by suitably qualified persons. The more complex equipment must be inspected by a qualified engineer.

Hidden problems must be looked for. Corrosion and metal fatigue can occur in moving parts, joints, bolts, chains and so on. Look for the weak link which may well be hidden out of sight. Preventative maintenance schedules must be designed to reveal potential fatigue failures in the vital parts of any equipment subjected to stress.

Inspections should target the obvious. Damaged surfaces and units, vandalism, broken safety fences, litter and other dangerous objects such as drink cans left lying about.

The design of all play units must be inherently safe for use. Young people will find ways of bypassing safety fences and guards, climbing frames, swings, slides etc. The inspection must be conducted in a vigilant manner - it is in effect a HAZARD spotting exercise as well as maintenance inspection.

Damaged equipment must be taken out of use, cordoned off and/or signed as appropriate.

### DESIGN FACTORS

Examine the siting of playgrounds, particularly access and egress. The presence of a busy highway passing access points is an obvious hazard to young persons. Such hazards should ideally be "designed out" in the planning stage.

Minimum use zones between equipment must be arranged so that there is no risk of collision.

Safety must always play the leading role when considering the "Play Value" of a site.

Safety surfaces play an important part in any play equipment. Inspections must ensure that all surfaces, that is equipment and terrain surfaces, remain safe at all times.

Seats, litter bins, safety fences and signs all form a part of the overall playground scenario. Each and every item must be HAZARD FREE.

Public Liability Insurance cover is dependent on the regular Safety Audit. If records are not available to support both the minimum annual certified inspection and the safety standards of the insurer, the Local Authority is at risk.