

Re-opening Playgrounds – Risk Management

Guidance for owners and operators of playgrounds and outdoor gyms to enable their use from 4 July while minimising the transmission risk of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Objective: That all owners and operators carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment

Owners and operators responsible for playgrounds or outdoor gyms must assess and manage the risk of potential COVID-19 transmission as relevant to the users of the equipment, such as children, parents, guardians and carers, as well as any staff hired or tasked with the maintenance or cleaning of equipment. Owners and operators also have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety. Owners and operators will need to think about the risks faced and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising that it is not possible to completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.

Owners and operators must ensure that the risk assessment for the playground or outdoor gym addresses the risks of COVID-19, using this guidance to inform decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating excessive paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control risk.

If the owner/operator has fewer than 5 workers, they do not have to write anything down as part of the risk assessment. The risk assessment will help owners/operators to decide whether everything required has been completed. The Health and Safety Executive has guidance for organisations on [how to manage the risk posed to users and risk assessment at work](#)

Preparing a playground or outdoor gym for re-opening

Owners and operators of playgrounds or outdoor gyms are reminded that in addition to preparations to ensure they are COVID-19 Secure, there will be general maintenance requirements. Owners/operators must ensure playground and/or exercise equipment is safe to use and that risks from damaged or defective equipment are addressed before opening.

Potential measures to facilitate social distancing include:

If an enclosed area, owners and operators should identify an advisory limit on the maximum number of users able to use a playground or outdoor gym area at any one time and use signs to communicate this

Limiting the number of users able to use a particular piece of equipment to minimise the transmission risk of COVID-19. Potential measures include:

- Signs to communicate maximum number of users at one time
- Request those using the play area to only have 1 family member accompanying a child
- Limiting the available number of seats on equipment or numbers of swings available to promote social distancing, including for parents, carers or guardians who might push children on swings for example
- Setting a time limit and using signs to communicate this to users, parents, guardians or carers

Cleaning and hygiene

Owners and operators are advised to manage any potential risk, cleaning high traffic touch points frequently. This could include cleaning regimes for:

- playground equipment for children, usually up to age 14, such as slides monkey bars and climbing frames
- entry and exit points such as gates
- seating areas such as benches and picnic tables
- refuse areas/bins

Owners and operators should encourage effective sanitation by users, parents, guardians and carers.

Consideration should be given to:

- using signs and posters:
 - to promote cleaning of equipment by users, parents, guardians and carers, particularly where there are clear touch points such as swing rockers, see saws, machine handles or exercise bars
 - encouraging parents to bring hand sanitiser gel or wipes to clean their children's hands
 - to encourage hand hygiene with including washing/sanitising hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and water or approved gel and foam sanitiser, particularly at the beginning and end of play
 - to advise users (or parents of users) not to touch their faces, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue or arm when a tissue is not available
 - to remind adults and children not to put their mouths on equipment or their hands in their mouths
 - to promote and remind users, parents, guardians and carers of the need for social distancing
- when communicating safety messages owners / operators should ensure they are able to reach those with hearing or vision impairments. Consideration should also be given on how to assist those with disabilities with complying with the changes
- providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection
- where practicable, providing hand sanitiser (automated where possible) or hand washing facilities at the entry and exit points, in addition to public toilets/washrooms
- using disposable paper towels in handwashing facilities where possible

Current government guidance states that face coverings should not be used by children under the age of 3 or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly. Parents should be aware that wearing a face covering in a playground setting could pose an additional safety risk and should use their judgement on whether their children wear a face covering.

It is important to use face coverings properly and that signs promote their use appropriately and make it clear users should wash their hands before putting them on and taking them off.

Additional measures and communicating with parents

Additional measures that can minimise the risk COVID-19 transmission in playgrounds and outdoor gyms focus on promoting responsible behaviour by children, parents, carers and guardians.

For example, owners and operators should consider putting up signs to make clear to users, parents, guardians and carers that:

- consumption of food or drink on play equipment or in the playground area is banned
- parents, guardians or carers should dispose of all litter including any used protective wear such as face coverings or gloves properly in litter bins, taking it home where a bin is not provided. Disposable face coverings and gloves cannot be recycled
- Owners and operators should provide clear information to parents to set clear expectations about how children should behave when using playgrounds during COVID-19. This may be through one or more of: signs adjacent to the playground, online (e.g. operator websites or community message boards), or through leafletting.

Owners and operators may wish to consider reminding parents of the owner/operator's legal obligations towards the playground users such as signs stating that allowing children to use playground equipment is done at their own risk where appropriate.

Owners/operators must take into account the requirements of children with additional needs.

Full guidance available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms>

Recommendation

The Council have 1 member of staff contracted to 8 hours per week based at home. The Council contract some minor repair, maintenance, and inspection work out. Regular cleaning and sanitisation of equipment is not part of the existing contract and the contractor may not be insured or trained for this work.

It is not feasible for regular sanitisation of the equipment to be done by the Council as the infrequency of which it could be managed would render it ineffective therefore users must be encouraged to take their own precautions with regards to using the equipment and the Parish Council need to ensure there is adequate signage in place to advise.

To meet our accessibility requirement for those with visual impairments and/or other difficulties we must ensure any advice is available on our website so that this information can be disseminated in other formats (e.g. by use of a screen reader)

We have discussed a bin replacement in 20/95 (Appendix 3) which will have capacity for more litter and be enclosed to stop litter blowing out as easily.

It is not feasible to provide hand sanitiser on site as there is no one to replenish when it runs out or deter from theft / vandalism. Signage will encourage users to bring hand sanitiser with them.

All equipment is effectively distanced from each other. Swings are individual, Seesaw is more than 2m in length between seats. Signage will need to encourage only 1 child (or children from the same household) on a piece of equipment at a time (except for the seesaw which would be limited to a child at each end)

Signage will need to be weather resistant and attached securely. Playground inspections should include checking these temporary notices. The Council will need to purchase a laminator (£30-50 for A3/A4) and pouches (£10-12 per pack of 30-60) or can use a printing service or purchase the necessary signage (not currently available)