

## Managing Risk in Play - Risk Benefit Assessment

**Carried out by:** Chris Gregory, Rose Burton, Chrissie Callaghan  
Review date Sept 18

**Position:** Playwork Development Officer

**Date:** 10/06/2014

**Description and location of activity or equipment:**

**Location:** Willaston School Playing field development . No Vehicular Access.

**Activity:** enhanced play area developments

**What specialist knowledge, if any, is needed for this risk benefit assessment?**

In some circumstances, where the relevant users and hazards are well understood and apparent, no specialist knowledge will be needed. In others (for instance those involving unusual user groups, significant structures, structures in trees or complex or new sites) technical expert input may be needed.

Knowledge or specialism	Person providing the knowledge / carrying out the assessment	Action proposed
Professional knowledge and experience		
Play specialist	Chris Gregory Level 3 Playworker, 15 years experience	Playwork staff to be briefed and debriefed at the start and end of every session
Tree specialist	Chris Gregory Forest school Practitioner	Trees to be identified, before the erection of swings and branches to be checked for strength before use. As guideline see attached Guide Document
Rope specialist	Chris Gregory – Rope check skills run through MOBEX	Chris Gregory attends rope and knot safety training on an annual basis to help ensure safety.
Maintenance staff	Caretaker	Sand down any noticeably splintered area during morning inspection

**Value-based risk-benefit assessment (see glossary below for explanation of terms)**

<b>Benefits</b>	Enjoyment, Physical activity, Build self esteem, Develop risk awareness, Develop motor skills, Develops an understanding of self, Building friendships, Independence, Emotional self exploration, Physical self exploration, Building a connection to nature, Develop 3D acuity, Develop problem solving, Develop communication skills, Understanding of evolution, Promotion of local green spaces,
<b>Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads and traffic</li> <li>• Falls, cuts, rope burns, splinters – a possibility but with little severity</li> <li>• Branch breaking or rope breaking resulting in child/children falling from height or branch crushing child/children</li> <li>• Reels set in the ground – injury from jumping/falling, splinters, reel collapsing, protruding bolts</li> <li>• Posts – falling/collapsing, splinters</li> </ul>
<b>Local factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ground litter: Dog poo, broken glass and needles</li> <li>• Roads and traffic around perimeter of playspace</li> <li>• Wet weather and slippery surfaces</li> <li>• Loose branches</li> <li>• Type of Tree (Sycamore)</li> </ul>
<b>Action to be Taken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff site check and removal of any broken glass, dog poo from area. Headteacher or senior staff to be informed if any found</li> <li>• Play is confined to school boundaries</li> <li>• Weekly visual inspection of rope swing by staff with 6 month inspection by installer<sup>1</sup>. Swing Checked by CG to be seconded by PM</li> <li>• Walkways to be kept clear of equipment</li> <li>• Reels to be inspected monthly – supervising staff to follow dynamic risk benefit assessment procedure<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Staff to ensure children do not disrespect and cause unnecessary damage to the environment and to perform site check before, during and after session</li> <li>• If posts have been identified as having excessive movement in them due to some weak installation. Any posts that can be lifted from the ground should be removed and the hole filled immediately. Posts should receive a daily inspection, checking for any foreign objects such as nails and checked for stability. The posts should be reinstalled more securely at an adequate depth with a wider concrete base. This should occur on a rolling basis with identified posts receiving priority, once reinstalled TCC to re-risk assess</li> <li>• Bolts on reel to be taken down with angle grinder</li> <li>• Play training given to all school staff</li> <li>• The playground has been developed in accordance with Managing Risk in Play Provision<sup>3</sup> however some modifications have been identified through problems at installation</li> </ul>



## Glossary

**Value-based, risk-benefit assessment:** a balanced approach that ensures that values and principles are considered as part of the assessment of a play structure, play equipment or play space.

**Benefits:** the specific, positive things that have been identified through the assessment that children and young people gain through the play opportunities that are under assessment (social, physical, emotional, psychological, etc.).

**Risks:** in general use, the work 'risk' refers to the probability, likelihood or chance of an adverse outcome. In risk management contexts, the word tends to include a measure of the seriousness of the adverse outcome, as well as its probability. The HSE defines risk as the chance that 'somebody could be harmed by [a hazard] together with an indication of how serious the harm could be'.

**Local factors:** any relevant issues that are specific to the setting being assessed (for example, locality to housing, characteristics of local residents and typical users, nature of supervision, access to the site, size of the site, proximity to busy roads or other hazards, etc.)

**Options:** the range of approaches that can be taken following the outcome of a risk-benefit assessment to support the play activity, structure, equipment or area (for example, allow the activity, take remedial action and limit use of the site until this is complete, take measures to counter local anxieties, etc.)

**Precedents &/or comparisons:** similar equipment, environments, loose parts or potential situations where play is taking place either locally or elsewhere. By referencing a similar play environment or situation, the assessor can show they have taken a considered approach.

**Decision:** this is the assessor's conclusion following a risk benefit assessment. The choices could include:

- Proceed/continue with no adjustments to the play environment or working practices and continue to monitor
- Proceed/continue with some specific adjustments to the play environment or working practices while continuing to monitor
- Cease use of the play environment until work can be carried out/further assessments can be made

**Action taken:** This should state the actions taken as a result of the decision reached. The choices could include:

- None
- Increase monitoring levels
- Book technical inspection
- Contact manufacturer to make modifications
- Meet with parents/users to raise awareness of approach to risk

### **Other language used when assessing risks and benefits for play**

**Safe:** 'safe' or 'safety's is perhaps the most commonly encountered term in debates about children and risk, such as: 'Is this playground/park/tree/public square safe?' There is no simple answer to questions like this, because the word 'safe' means different things to different people (see Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide, p. 31).

**Hazards:** hazards are potential sources of harm. The HSE defines a hazard as 'anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer, etc.' There is no action and no object that may not be hazardous in certain circumstances... It is impractical to treat all potential hazards with the same degree of seriousness. We need to make judgements about:

- Which hazards need to be modified or removed.
- Which hazards might be acceptable or desirable, because of their benefits to children and young people.
- What, if anything, is to be done about hazards that have been identified.

(Referenced from Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide, pp 31-32).

**Playwork Principles:** the professional and ethical framework for playwork, which describes what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

### **References**

<sup>1</sup> Children's Tree Swings – a guide to good practice: Produced by London Play, Written by Monkey-Do, Part-funded from the National Lottery by Natural England

\*<sup>2</sup> Children's Play Risk Management Framework: Dynamic Risk Benefit Assessment Cycle

\*<sup>3</sup> Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide: Play England (2013)

### **Feedback/comments on this form:**

The Children's Centre keeps its approach to risk benefit assessment under review and would welcome feedback on this form.

Please send any comments to [chrisgregory@thechildrencentre.org.im](mailto:chrisgregory@thechildrencentre.org.im)