

HOUSING LANDLORD SERVICES

Playgrounds and play equipment Policy



Document

Name of policy	Housing Landlord Services Playgrounds and Play Equipment Policy
Document reference	HLSPOL06
Purpose of policy	<p>New Forest District Council is committed to its legal obligations in accordance with Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Act 1992, Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and will strive to reduce the risks associated with playgrounds and play equipment to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.</p> <p>This policy supports the Council's overarching Health and Safety Policy and sets out the guiding principles and arrangements for Housing Landlord Services.</p>
Policy applies to	This policy and subsequent arrangements apply to all employed housing staff within New Forest District Council and, where appropriate, tenants, contractors, care providers and members of the public.
Lead officer	Service Manager – Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing
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Review period	At least every three years from date of issue. Otherwise, as required by legislative, contractual, or organisational changes.
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1. Introduction

This policy has been prepared to formally recognise the maintenance and inspection strategy of New Forest District Council's play and leisure facilities (Controlled by Housing Services) and the assets within these facilities. 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 risks. 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. Legislative and regulatory context

Legislative and Regulatory Context

There is no specific legislation on play safety. However, the key legislation is the: Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Act 1992, Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 and Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

New Forest District Council and its staff have a duty to take actions to ensure the safety of people at work and members of the public who may be affected by the facilities it provides. It is governed by the test of “reasonable practicability”. In other words, it is reasonable to correct major hazards; it is unreasonable to spend considerable resources on minor faults where risk is negligible and potential injury very minor.

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

These are not retrospective and provide advice on design layout and the inspection of playground equipment. Contained within the guidance are the following key recommendations: If the equipment is not safe, access by the public should be prevented. The equipment must be inspected and maintained. An inspection record should be kept and maintained.

Civil Legislation

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.

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 Risks and Benefits

The Council’s Risk Management Approach will aim to offer play spaces that are stimulating, and challenging environments enabling children to explore and develop their abilities. In providing these environments the Council will manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks and hazards.

2. Definitions

Routine Visual Inspections – BS-EN 1176 – P7 C 6.1b

Inspection intended to identify obvious hazards that can result from normal use, vandalism, or weather conditions, at the frequency specified by the operator. Typical hazards can take the form of broken parts or broken bottles. For playgrounds subject to heavy use or vandalism, daily inspection of this type can be necessary. Examples of visual inspection points are cleanliness, ground surface finishes, missing parts etc. Inspectors will be trained to RPII Routine level.

Operational Inspection – BS-EN1176 – P7 C 6.1c

Operational Inspections provide a more detailed inspection to check the operation and stability of all equipment and surfaces especially for wear.

It is recommended that 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 amount and intensity of use in the area and equipment's durability.

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.

Inspectors will be trained to RPII Operational Inspector level.

Annual Main Inspection – BS-EN1176 – P7 C 6.1d

These inspections will approximately be carried out every 12 months and are intended to establish the overall level of safety of equipment, foundations and playing surfaces and check for compliance with the relevant part(s) of BS-EN 1176 and/or risk assessment, including any changes made as a result of the assessment of safety measures, effects of weather, presence of rot, decay or corrosion, and any change in the level of safety of the equipment or surfacing as a result of repairs made or added or replaced components.

The annual main inspection might involve excavation. If excavation is not possible, other methods can be used, e.g., the resistograph method for detecting rotting of wood. Additional measures might be necessary to detect other possible deterioration of the structure and the surfacing (e.g. checking for appropriate level of impact attenuation). Technical support can be required where components require dismantling to assess their condition.

The annual Inspections are to be carried out by the Council's insurance inspector and will be arranged by the Housing Asset and Compliance Administrative Officer.

Operational and annual inspections, whether inspection carried out by a Council employee or contractor working on behalf of the authority and trained to the relevant RP11 Inspector level, will be recorded using the same method and system.

Bespoke Inspections

These inspections can be carried out by The Play Inspection Company or other suitably qualified commissioned provider at the request of the Housing Asset (Maintenance) Manager or Housing Asset and Compliance Administrative Officer.

Typically, bespoke inspections are a consequence of enquiry from a community member, an accident in a play facility, in response to an urgent request. Bespoke inspections are also carried out as a method of verifying and checking existing inspections.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is the “responsible person” for the purposes of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Act 1992, Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 and Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and nominates one or more persons to act on their behalf to discharge their responsibilities as set out below:

Strategic Director of Housing and Communities

The Strategic Director of 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 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

The Service Manager for Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing is the responsible person for the operational delivery and compliance of this policy.

Housing Asset (Maintenance) Manager

The Housing Asset (Maintenance Manager) will lead and manage the Council’s Housing Landlord Services response to playparks and play equipment periodic inspection regimes, recording of information and action necessary repairs or removal of equipment as set out within this policy, supported by the Housing Asset and Compliance Administrative Officer.

Housing Asset and Compliance Administrative Officer

The Housing Asset and Compliance Administrative Officer will support the Housing Asset (Maintenance) Manager in the operational day-to-day delivery of arrangements, inspection scheduling, inspection recording and asset data management and set out within this policy.

Stock Condition Surveyors

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 Housing Asset (Maintenance) Manager.

5. Accidents and injury

The Council will record all accidents notified to it and enquires relating to the play areas 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. 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 refer:

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

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.

This information shall be used to improve the safety of the playground and be retained for reference purpose and to facilitate the defence of personal injury claims.

6. Playground inspection methodology

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 leisure facilities under the Council’s Housing Landlord Services responsibility will be carried out weekly by the services employed Stock Condition Surveyors and quarterly by The Play Inspection Company or other suitably qualified commissioned provider.

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

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)	The Play Inspection Company or other suitability qualified commissioned provider
Annual	Annual (RPII Outdoor Annual Inspector)	Zurich or RPII Outdoor Annual Inspector
Bespoke	Reactive	The Play Inspection Company or other suitability qualified commissioned provider (at the request of the Service Manager – Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing)

7. Appendices

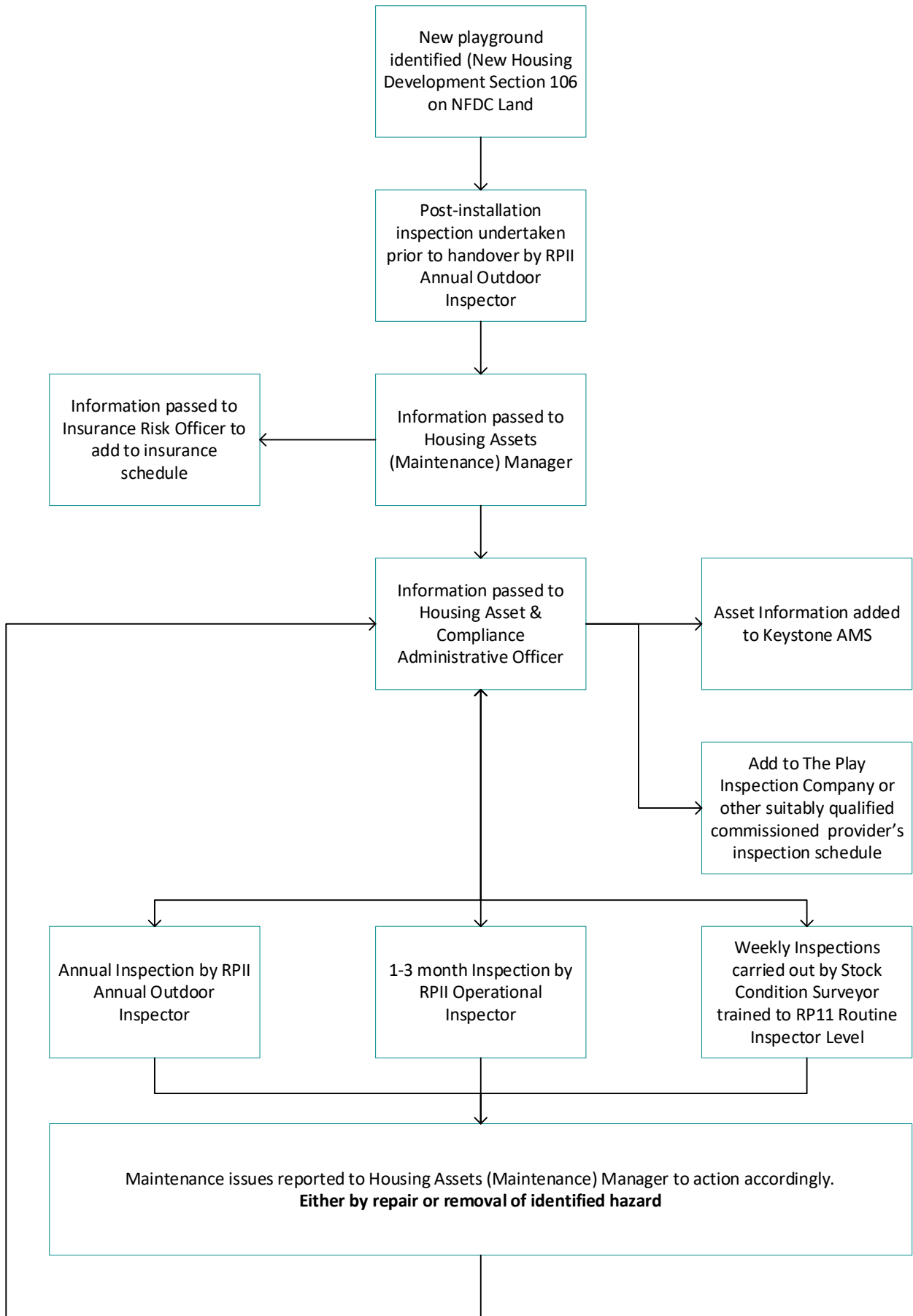
Appendix A

Schedule of Playparks falling under the responsibility of Housing Landlord Services

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

Appendix B

Process Map



New Forest District Council
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