



Sturminster Newton Town Council

Play Area Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out Sturminster Newton Town Council's approach to the safe management, inspection, and maintenance of its play areas. The safety and wellbeing of children using Council facilities are of paramount importance.

2. Policy Statement

Sturminster Newton Town Council is committed to providing safe, well-maintained, and inclusive play areas. The Council will follow recognised industry standards, relevant legislation, and guidance issued by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to ensure high levels of safety and quality.

3. Standards and Legal Framework

The Council will ensure that:

1. All play equipment and surfacing conforms to current standards, including:
 - BS EN 1176 – Playground Equipment Standard
 - BS EN 1177 – Impact-Attenuating Surfacing
2. Installation of new equipment or resurfacing is carried out by competent professionals and in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and industry best practice.
3. A post-installation independent inspection is completed for all new equipment or major refurbishment prior to opening for public use.
4. Operations comply with relevant legislation, including:
 - Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
 - Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 & 1984

4. Inspection and Maintenance Regime

The Council will operate a structured inspection regime consistent with RoSPA guidance.

4.1 Routine (Weekly) Visual Inspections

A visual inspection will be carried out weekly by the Assistant Grounds Manager.

This high-level walk-through will identify:

- Obvious hazards or damage
- Vandalism

- Litter, sharps or contamination
- Issues with fences, gates or access routes
- Any immediately visible equipment defects

Any hazards or defects identified must be reported immediately to the Grounds Manager, who will determine appropriate follow-up action.

4.2 Monthly Operational Inspections

A more detailed inspection will be conducted monthly by trained grounds staff.

These inspections will include:

- Wear and tear
- Moving parts, joints and fixings
- Surfacing condition
- Structural condition of equipment
- Ancillary items such as benches, bins, fences and gates

Monthly inspections will be formally recorded using the Council's bespoke auditing software.

4.3 Annual Independent Inspection

A qualified and independent playground inspector will carry out an annual inspection reviewing:

- Compliance with BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177
- Overall site safety and risk levels
- Structural and mechanical integrity
- Suitability and layout
- Recommendations for repair, upgrade or removal

Findings will be recorded in the Council's auditing software and reported to the Grounds Manager and Town Clerk.

4.4 Reactive Inspections

Additional inspections may take place following:

- Public reports
- Accidents or incidents
- Vandalism
- Safety concerns raised by staff

5. Record-Keeping

The Council will maintain accurate digital records of:

- Monthly operational inspections
- Annual independent inspections
- Reactive inspections
- Identified defects
- Maintenance and repair actions
- Incident and accident reports

Records will be retained according to the Council's retention schedules.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Assistant Grounds Manager

- Carries out the weekly visual inspection.
- Reports any hazards or defects immediately to the Grounds Manager.
- Responds to urgent issues when necessary to ensure public safety.

Grounds Manager

- Receives and acts on hazard reports from the weekly visual inspection.
- Oversees monthly operational inspections and ensures they are recorded.
- Coordinates and responds to defects, maintenance needs and repairs.
- Manages reactive inspections as required.
- Reports serious safety concerns to the Town Clerk.

Town Clerk

- Commissions the annual independent inspection.
- Ensures compliance with statutory responsibilities.
- Advises the Amenities Committee or Town Council of significant issues.
- Oversees policy implementation and supports escalation where necessary.

Parents and Carers

Council play areas are unsupervised facilities.

Parents, guardians and carers remain responsible for supervising the children in their care.

7. Signage

Each play area will display clear signage including:

- Contact details for reporting issues
- Any temporary closures, restrictions or safety notices

8. Temporary Closures

The Council reserves the right to close play areas or individual equipment if:

- A safety concern is identified
- Repairs or maintenance work is required
- Severe weather or vandalism necessitates closure

9. Staff Training and Competence

Staff undertaking operational inspections must have appropriate training, such as RoSPA-recognised operational inspection training or equivalent. Training records will be maintained by the Council.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Every two years, or
- Earlier if legislation, standards, RoSPA guidance or operational needs change.

Adopted: Dec 25

Review Due: Dec 27