

ADAPT

my play
guide and toolkit



How to create, manage, sustain and improve an Inclusive Play Park

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1. Introduction

Welcome to *ADAPT my Play*, a guide co-written by Mae Murray Foundation membership and PlayBoard NI to support local authorities, voluntary organisations, housing associations, schools, private play providers and other organisations to develop inclusive play parks in their local area.

All children have the right to play. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and subsequently ratified by the UK government in 1991. The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people a comprehensive set of rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was adopted in 2006 and ratified by the UK in 2009. The UNCRPD is an international human rights treaty which identifies the rights of disabled people as well as the obligations on Parliament and the NI Assembly to promote, protect and ensure those rights.



Four UNCRC articles have a key connection to the issue of inclusive play.



- Article 31: (the Right to Play) morally and legally entitles all children and young people access to play opportunities whatever their culture, level of ability, impairment, gender, language, background, behaviour or need.
- Article 23: focuses specifically on children with a disability and states that a child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence to play an active part in the community.
- Article 12: states that Governments must respect the views, feelings and wishes of children and young people on all matters affecting them and be taken seriously.
- Article 2: Article 2 explains that children and young people have the right not to be discriminated against – including when accessing play facilities.
- Article 30 of the UNCRPD reaffirms the right to play for children with disabilities and states that governments must ensure that children with disabilities have equal access to participation in play, recreation and leisure sporting activities.

Despite ratification families continue to find themselves excluded from play parks through a lack of site accessibility, a lack of accessible equipment, poor amenity provision and negative public attitudes.

The lack of progress to date was highlighted recently by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its most recent review (2023) which included a *specific recommendation for the UK and Northern Ireland to "...Strengthen measures to ensure that all children, including children with disabilities ... have access to accessible and safe public outdoor play spaces."*

The Northern Ireland Executive's commitment to delivering on their UN obligations is embedded within the Children and Young People's Strategy (2020-2030) for Northern Ireland. Developed through a rights-based approach the strategy provides the framework through which departments commit to working together to improve the well-being of all children and young people.

The Strategy has 8 key outcomes the second of which focuses on the right to enjoy play and leisure. It gives a commitment to *"work to maximise opportunities for the inclusive participation of children and young people with a disability, and their families, in all play, leisure and cultural activities"*. The strategy also aims to 'promote awareness of the needs of children and young people with a disability so that these are taken into account by those facilitating, promoting or designing play or leisure services and facilities.



In March 2022, Mae Murray Foundation and PlayBoard NI published the [Let me Play](#) report which highlighted the findings of research focused specifically on the barriers faced by families who have a family member who is physically disabled, is neurodivergent, has a learning, sensory, medical or combination of needs, when accessing play parks in Northern Ireland. The *Let me Play* report was endorsed at a UK level by the Children's Play Policy Forum and UK Play Safety Forum through a groundbreaking joint statement, [Including Disabled Children in Play Provision](#), which saw leading play experts collectively agree on the need for focused action in order to deliver true inclusion in our play parks.

Seeking to build on both *Let me Play* and *Including Disabled Children in Play Provision*, the *ADAPT my Play* guide and associated toolkit explains in detail how play providers can design and create play parks that meet the needs of all children when accessing play parks in Northern Ireland.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank BBC Children in Need for supporting the publication of this guide, and particularly for giving voice to Mae Murray Foundation Youth Panel whose lived experiences have shaped *ADAPT my Play*.

Thanks also to Mae Murray Foundation's Advisory Committee, young children from our membership, stakeholders and critical friends for invaluable input and honest guidance.

The Let me Play study highlighted that play parks are important environments for disabled adults who continue to benefit from play throughout their lifespan, and for disabled adults who are parenting children. Good play provision will make children and adults of all ages and abilities feel welcome and comfortable in the space.



2. Mae Murray Foundation – Who we are and what we do

The origins of Mae Murray Foundation are rooted in the birth of Talia McDowell, the daughter of our chairperson and founder, Alix Crawford. Born in 1999 and diagnosed with quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy, both Talia and Alix found themselves socially excluded and isolated as a result of Talia's complex needs.



Determined to make a difference to others facing the same barriers, Alix established Mae Murray Foundation in 2016. Named after her late mother, Mae Murray, who embodied a positive, can-do attitude and a passionate commitment to inclusivity, the charity started out with just 20 families. Today it numbers over 1500 member families (comprising 4500 people), clear evidence of the huge need for, and positive impact of, its work.

Mae Murray Foundation is a lived-experience, membership led organisation which makes it possible for people of all ages and abilities to experience the world together, taking part in activities and building friendships in environments which are genuinely inclusive. The Foundation runs a comprehensive range of innovative and inclusive projects for children, teenagers and adults. These range from outdoor activities to music and social events, and a popular resource loan scheme. The Foundation draws on its members' lived experiences to co-design and implement permanent solutions in everyday environments like play parks so that everyone can participate together.

Mae Murray Foundation recognises each person to be of equal and inseparable value, regardless of physical or learning ability, sensory, medical or undiagnosed condition, age or caring role, background, culture, orientation or identity choice. It is particularly focused on making sure that people with more complex needs, whose requirements are often overlooked, are able to participate fully. For more information visit www.maemurrayfoundation.org.





3. PlayBoard NI – Who we are and what we do

PlayBoard is an independent charity and lead organisation for the development and promotion of children and young people’s play in Northern Ireland.

PlayBoard’s vision is of ‘A society where the right to play is both valued and realised’. Its mission is to achieve this by ‘Leading the Play Agenda’: ensuring that at every level of decision making across society, the child’s right to play is not only acknowledged but made a reality within the lives of children, young people, families and communities.

Since its establishment in 1985, PlayBoard has been committed to supporting children and young people’s play through:

- Advocating for the development of a regional play policy and supporting the development of a play strategy, and support for regional and local council government strategies aimed at embedding the child’s right to play within statutory policy and practice.
- The development and delivery of play programmes and delivery at local level within schools, community organisations, youth settings and School Age Childcare settings.

- Providing strategic representation and operational guidance and support to the School Age Childcare Sector across Northern Ireland.
- Campaigning and lobbying across the political spectrum to highlight the critical importance of play in children’s lives.
- Conducting research on the impact of play, programme evaluation and raising awareness, emphasising the importance of play for children, young people, families and communities.
- Working in partnership with others to put play on the agenda of policy makers and resource providers; and
- Promoting best practice in Play and Playwork.

A membership organisation, PlayBoard works from the premise that play is fundamental to a healthy and happy childhood, contributing to children’s physical and emotional health, learning, skills and social development.

For further information on PlayBoard visit www.playboard.org

4. Why is this guide needed?

Children need to play. Play is one of the most developmentally important activities that children engage in. The urge to play is natural, intrinsic and represents an essential element of all children's lives, actively contributing to the enjoyment of childhood.

From a developmental perspective, play drives social, emotional, intellectual and physical development whilst enabling children to learn about and engage with the world around them, exploring ideas and concepts whilst developing understanding and new skills.

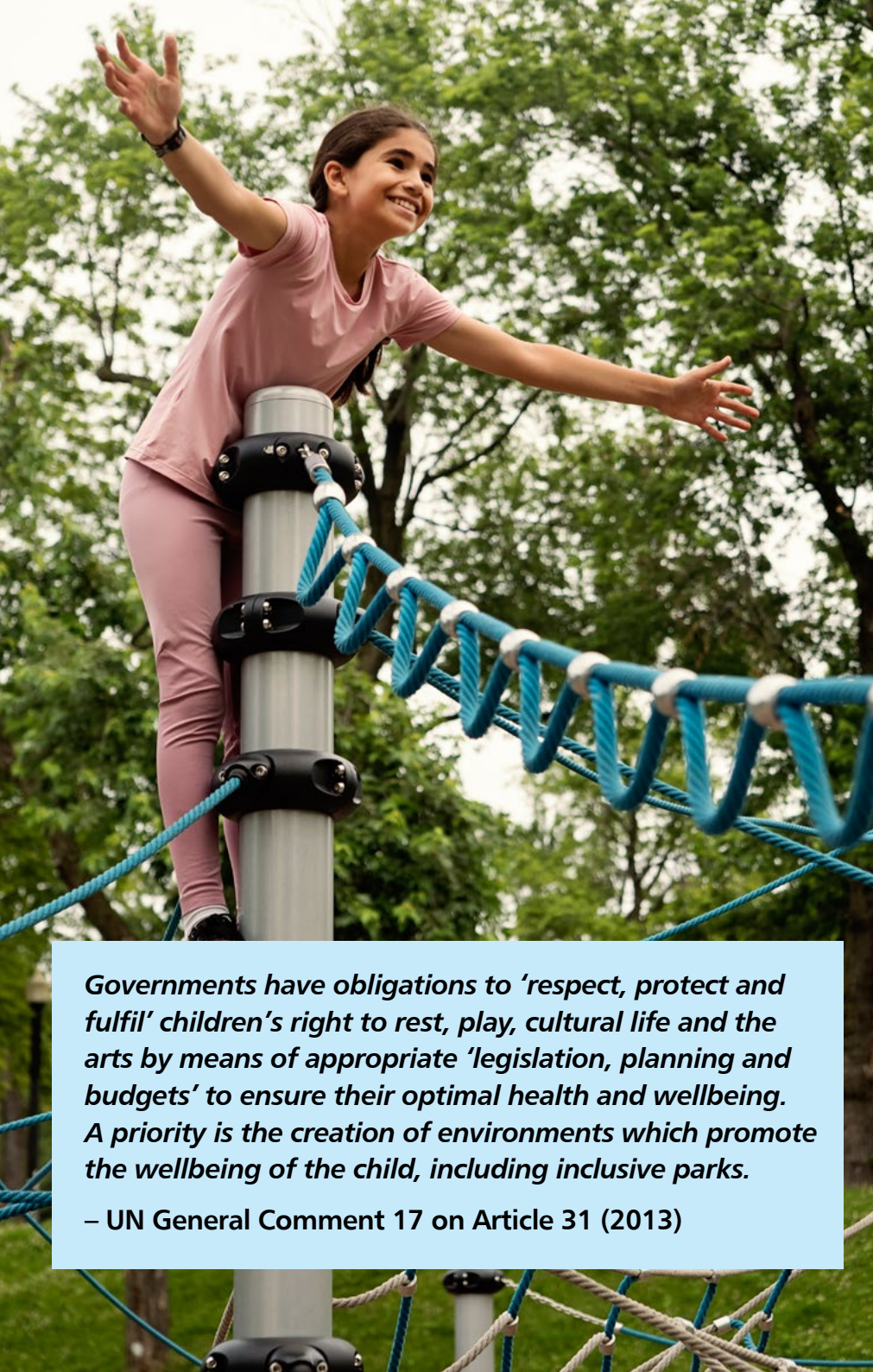
Over recent years, play providers, playground designers and those involved in the play equipment manufacturing industry have taken significant strides in developing an array of innovative and creative solutions to meet the play needs of children with a wide range of ability levels.

Despite these welcome advances, some children continue to face discrimination, exclusion and barriers to realising their right to play, as evidenced in *Let me Play*. Published in 2023 over 500 families in Northern Ireland contributed to the research, through a combination of regional survey and focus groups.

- 57% are unable to play as often as they would like.
- 60% viewed play parks as important spaces for their child/children which they would like to attend more regularly.

- 40% rated the play experience on offer within fixed play parks as being poor or very poor.
- 66% identified a lack of opportunity to actively take part in play as the key barrier faced.
- 56% reported having to travel long distances just to be able to access a play park that met their family's play needs.
- Prevalence of need reported can extend to up to four children in a family.
- 49% indicated that in order to use a play park they required an accessible toilet, to Changing Places standard.
- 30% identified insufficient or inappropriate parking.





Governments have obligations to 'respect, protect and fulfil' children's right to rest, play, cultural life and the arts by means of appropriate 'legislation, planning and budgets' to ensure their optimal health and wellbeing. A priority is the creation of environments which promote the wellbeing of the child, including inclusive parks.

– UN General Comment 17 on Article 31 (2013)

In addition, the research highlighted a lack of consistency in approaches to play park design between different local authority areas with budgetary restrictions and procurement processes often inhibiting the active involvement of people with direct, lived experience in the process and limiting the opportunity to work together on design.

Children and their families want to be able to access play parks which offer a wide range of features and facilities that support their play needs. Families which include a person or persons who have a specific need, or a combination of needs can feel let down when play parks, described as 'inclusive', lack the design features and amenities they need.

At a time when opportunities for investment in play parks are increasingly scarce, it is critical that capital investment delivers play spaces which are genuinely inclusive, offering opportunities equally rich in play value for everyone – enabling children of all ages and abilities to interact, learn, make friends and socialise with each other. Such inclusive participation will help children establish positive attitudes towards individuality from an early stage in their development.

The *ADAPT my Play* guide and toolkit gives play park providers the necessary detail to build genuinely inclusive play parks. It also provides stakeholders and funders with measurable criteria to ensure that play park investment includes all children, whatever their needs.

Crucially, *ADAPT my Play* gives the Northern Ireland Executive the means to progress the aims of its Children and Young People's Strategy for Northern Ireland (2020-2030) and implement the child's Right to Play, in line with their UN Convention obligations.

5. Inclusive Play Parks

The UK Play Safety Forum (PSF) and Children's Play Policy Forum (CPPF) state that all children must be able to enjoy play spaces that work well for them and their families within a reasonable distance of their home.

Including Disabled Children in Play Provision, highlights the distinction between accessible and inclusive play spaces. It acknowledges that, although all play spaces should be accessible, not all play spaces can or will be inclusive. Therefore, it is paramount that spaces which are planned as inclusive environments have a design process to ensure they meet the true definition. The term *accessible* and the term *inclusive* should not be used interchangeably. Confusion around this terminology contributes to a lack of appropriate provision.

The agreed definitions are:

An Inclusive Play Space provides a barrier-free environment, with supporting infrastructure, which meets the wide and varying play needs of every child. Disabled children and non-disabled children will enjoy high levels of participation.

An Accessible Play Space is a space which is barrier-free, allows users access to move around the space and offers participation opportunities for a range of differing abilities. Not every child of every ability will be able to actively use everything within an accessible play space.



The PSF and CPPF explain how inclusive play spaces will have the following characteristics:

- The aims of the facility are clearly stated.
- Parents/carers and children have the opportunity to understand layout, play equipment, overall space and facilities before arrival.
- Designers and providers engage with local transport providers to review accessible transport links.
- Inclusive play equipment is located across the entire scope of the play space and is not confined to a designated or segregated area.
- Known barriers to participation are addressed.

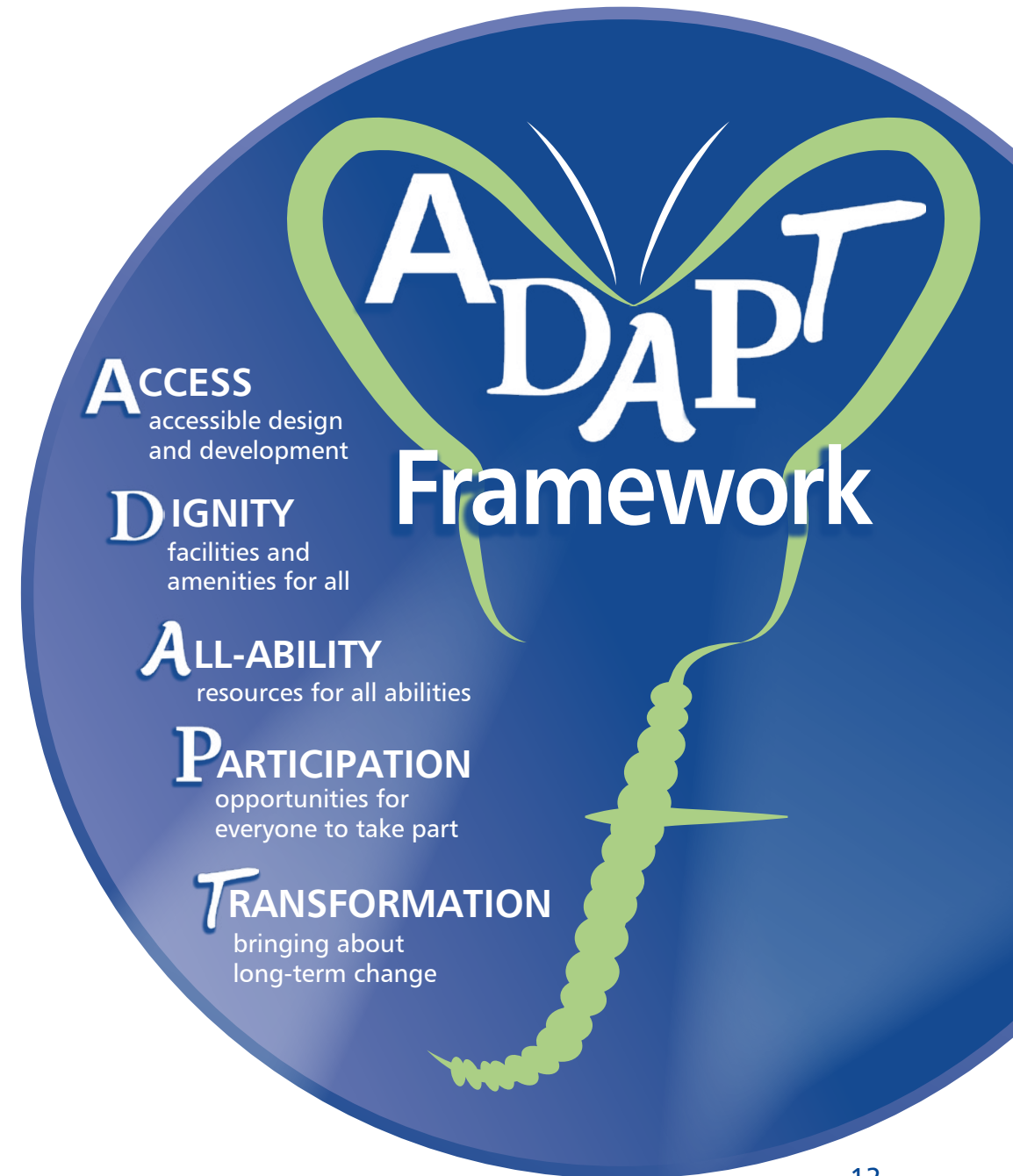
The *ADAPT my Play* guide and toolkit is a resource to lead to the creation of Inclusive Play Parks. In order to meet the definition of an Inclusive Play Park, **ALL** of the essential criteria within the toolkit **MUST** be met, without exception.



6. The ADAPT framework

Mae Murray Foundation and PlayBoard NI are committed to inclusivity, the importance of embedding lived experience within design processes, and to sharing knowledge which supports others to create genuinely inclusive spaces.

To that end, Mae Murray Foundation's membership, all with lived experience, has co-produced and developed the ADAPT framework. *ADAPT my Play* is just one of a series of guides, all underpinned by the ADAPT framework.



The term access describes measures which remove actual barriers. Common examples would be providing a ramp option where there are stairs, or providing an information leaflet in a digital format which works with screen readers.

Geographic Access

Play park providers who are responsible for multiple play parks across a large geographic area must carefully consider the requirement for inclusive play park provision which meet the needs of all children, located within a reasonable distance of every child's home. In order to achieve this, strategic placement of inclusive play parks at well-chosen sites needs to be a key feature of the decision making and budgetary process.

Physical Access

Inclusive play park design must consider access and connectivity across the entire location, as well as the visitor journey.

It is acknowledged that changes to surrounding infrastructure and public transport is often outside of the remit of play park providers. However, action should be taken to ensure other stakeholders or government departments are informed about any inclusive play park development, including the highlighting of any known barriers or shortfalls in relation to connectivity to the play park.

Onsite, appropriate and ample accessible parking as well as setting-down points are critical to ensuring that disabled people can access outdoor places and, while they are there, enjoy outdoor recreation opportunities with minimal stress. Accessible parking provision should include wider and longer parking bays to accommodate medium/large wheelchair accessible vehicles. Play parks can get very busy at the weekend and throughout the summer. Insufficient designated on-site accessible parking creates a barrier to taking part.

Visitors should be able to move from point of arrival at the park, to play equipment, café, toilet and any other services or amenities, safely and confidently. Pathways, ramps, terrain, handrails, signage should all be compliant with accessibility standards. Access to shelter, rest and quieter spaces are important features, whilst filtered access to challenges, which may be potential hazards for some skill levels, are necessary to reduce inbuilt risk factors.

Access to information

All visitors should be able to access important information about their visit in a format suited to their individual needs. This includes information provided both at the play park and, importantly, prior to a visit. The most sought-after information includes details about amenities such as parking, toilets, cafes, opening hours, park layout, equipment and what to expect. Pictures, videos and storyboards are all useful ways to share play park information with visitors in advance of their visit. Upon arrival at the play park, the inclusive aims of the play park should be easily visible, and maps or information should be available in various formats.



Dignity - The basic need to refresh, rest and refuel must be met for all, without exception.

Government policy promotes community participation and active citizenship, yet people continue to be disabled by their environment, preventing them from taking part. A lack of appropriate toilet facilities is a common barrier and denies many the most basic of human rights. Remember that excluding one family member often means excluding an entire family or group. Dignity for all is paramount and is a key component of our *ADAPT my Play* guide. Refreshing and refuelling are basic human needs and inclusive play park amenities must make appropriate provision for all ages and abilities.

Dignified Toileting

A play park is only genuinely inclusive if it has both accessible toilets and a Changing Places toilet (CPT). A Changing Places toilet has additional space, a hoist and an adult-sized changing bench, amongst other facilities. Changing Places toilets are registered by the Changing Places Toilet Consortium and meet an agreed list of criteria. A practical guide to the design of Changing Places can be found at www.changing-places.org. Regardless of building regulations, the provision of accessible toilets alone will exclude some children and their families, forcing them to risk their own health and safety. Carrying out changing on a toilet floor is dangerous, unhygienic and undignified, and inevitably stops people from going to the play park. Here is a picture of a typical Changing Places toilet from [Changing Places Toilets \(changing-places.org\)](http://Changing Places Toilets (changing-places.org)).



Dignified Amenities

Everyone has a right to eat and drink with dignity, something most people take for granted. To make this a reality, amenities at an inclusive play park must consider the needs of all visitors. For example, picnic benches should be designed with space for several wheelchair users to eat together, with their family or friends, and sited on hard terrain suitable for wheelchair users. Cafés should consider counter heights, table leg positioning, and general space around the venue as well as visitors with specialist dietary needs. For example, those whose food must be blended and may need access to a microwave.

See [Top Tips for Café Providers in Inclusive Environments](#). (link to follow)

The joy of play is that every child can play in their own way, at their own pace, making their own choices. Sometimes children like to play together and sometimes they like to play alone. Some will enjoy noisy, boisterous play at times, and at other times will need to retreat to a quiet, enclosed space.

Use of space and natural vegetation is important with space to run free being key. A secure boundary is essential to protect children who may not understand danger. Inclusive play parks are an amazing opportunity for children of differing abilities, and from a multitude of backgrounds, to meet and feel connected to their community.

Good design will consider the individual needs of all children, explore many different types of play, whether social, physical, sensory or creative and offer opportunities that are equally rich in choice and play value for every child. This does not mean that every play resource will be suitable for every child.

Sensory elements, both natural and synthetic, will enhance the play experience. Creating new, and familiar, neurological experiences for children and adults triggered by sight, hearing, smell and touch can be particularly beneficial for neurodivergent children or children who have a sensory processing disorder. They create a therapeutic and comforting environment in which children can engage in sensory experiences without becoming overwhelmed.

Similarly, with equipment choices – those with multi-sensory interactions will further improve the play experience. Surface and tactile changes or auditory feedback will also assist with wayfinding.



Swinging, sliding, spinning, rocking, bouncing, jumping all stimulate the vestibular system and can assist spatial awareness. Improvements and innovations from play manufacturers over recent years means there are many equipment options to help strengthen a child's sense of equilibrium, improve coordination and balance, improve upper, lower and core body strength as well as flexibility.

Play parks have a key role in supporting the development of children's decision-making, self-regulation, self-confidence and ability to recognise and manage risks, whilst developing the skills required to overcome challenges. Inclusive play parks should therefore provide a range of play equipment and play opportunities that offer challenge to all, with a range of graduated challenge levels, enabling children to progress in line with their individual level of development. In some cases, certain challenging activities may need to have a form of filtered access to ensure only those with higher skills levels are exposed to the inbuilt risk factors. A balanced approach to risk and challenge is required. Opportunities which challenge at an individual level will excite and build new skills, promoting a healthy active lifestyle.

Overall, an inclusive play park will provide every child with a variety of activities and equipment to choose from, equally rich in play value.



Gaining access to the play park environment and suitable facilities, resources and equipment is just the start of the journey to taking part within the community.

Creating a welcoming environment where everyone feels included can easily be disrupted due to inappropriate placement or labelling of equipment, which inhibits participation. Adaptive equipment should be integrated throughout the play park and never segregated to one area. Usage should not be labelled by age as this does not reflect the wide range of need within our communities. Instead, give usage guidance based on challenge level. Words and pictures can represent different challenge levels.

Actively encouraging participation is a key element of creating an inclusive play park. Scheduling events and activities will help break down barriers to engagement, reduce isolation and improve physical and mental wellbeing. Inclusive community events within your play park also empowers visitors to learn new skills, push boundaries and better understand one another. It is also helpful to parents to demonstrate the play value of different choices, through materials and resources.

It is important to remember that visitors may have had negative experiences in the past when they have been excluded so it may take time to build confidence in the play park. Providing a range of activities for children of different needs and abilities, particularly those with more complex requirements, is just one way to reach out and welcome children and their families.



Changing the infrastructure so that people can access the play park and increasing participation initiatives is key, but more work is needed. Our members' direct, lived experience tells us that negative attitudes, a shortage of joined-up services, and poor planning, create further barriers.

Collaboration between play park providers and other stakeholders to promote diversity will transform attitudes within communities. Education of local children through the school curriculum could be invaluable and providing parents/caregivers of non-disabled children with information and support to embrace diversity will help the transformation process.

A joined-up approach at a strategic government level from departments such as Communities, Infrastructure, Finance, Health and Education through to the local community planning process can influence and positively support the creation of inclusive spaces where children and their families recognise one another to be of equal and inseparable value.



This transformation will not happen overnight and will require ongoing engagement and purposeful support. Once all-ability participation is visible and expected, society will change for the better.

7. ADAPT my Play toolkit

Creating an inclusive play park should always begin with getting to know the community.

Start by finding out as much as you can about the children who will visit, building a good understanding of the wide range of abilities and needs for which the play park will cater. It is best not to replicate an existing play park, or adopt an 'off-the-shelf' approach to play park design. Instead, look to children and young people themselves, the local community and the site location/history for inspiration. Seek to move beyond traditional approaches to play park design, creating more natural, adventurous and engaging play environments. Embrace creativity and the challenge to deliver a unique play park that offers all children new and exciting experiences. Initially, the only restriction should be your imagination.

Published by PlayBoard and Mae Murray Foundation the *ADAPT my Play* guide should be read in conjunction with the *ADAPT my Play* toolkit found [here](#) and on our websites. The toolkit will support the creation of a play park which the community wants and ensures every child's needs are met, regardless of whether or not they were involved in the community consultation process.



The *ADAPT my Play* toolkit does not seek to cover the more technical aspects of play park design. It is a tool to aid the overall design process. Play park providers should familiarise themselves with the general principles of creating a play park which is rich in 'play value', and must refer to their architect, or other technical expert, for up to date technical information and standards that exist to advance safety in the play park.

The term 'play value' is used to describe the range and quality of play opportunities and experiences offered by a play environment. It is also used to describe the value a space (or piece of equipment) brings to children to help them extend their play experience. A space rich in play value creates opportunities for a variety of physical, social and sensory play experiences to take place.

ADAPT my Play challenges us all to: adapt our thinking and planning; make inclusion central to the delivery of community facilities, projects and services; and commit to delivering specific actions and goals that contribute to building an inclusive society.

Play space providers who are planning an inclusive play park should commit to delivering all of the criteria in this toolkit, except those listed as optional or for consideration.



This toolkit, or its associated guide, does not negate the need for public consultation. The involvement of the local community, and children in particular, should be central to the development of any play park.

If you have an experience or suggestion which you feel will improve this document, please contact Mae Murray Foundation at info@maemurrayfoundation.org or PlayBoard at info@playboard.org.

8. Gather feedback and review need

In order to ensure that an inclusive play park continues to meet people's evolving needs, it is essential to gather feedback from park visitors and listen to, and learn from, their experiences at the park – especially children.

New needs may be identified, and manufacturers may introduce more innovative solutions. The *ADAPT my Play* toolkit includes an Action Plan with suggestions on how play park managers can gather feedback.

ADAPT my Play guidance and toolkit will remain under regular review by Mae Murray Foundation and PlayBoard NI.



9. How can funders confidently fund inclusion in play parks?

Funders who are interested in supporting inclusion want to see everyone benefit from their projects with no one being left out.

Due to the potential number of stakeholders involved in the creation of an inclusive play park (the land or park owner, architects, playground design companies, equipment manufacturers and civil engineers), the intention behind the funding can be lost during the design and procurement process.

Funders can take steps to ensure outcome delivery, such as:

1. Adopting the *ADAPT my Play* guide and toolkit and making adherence to the guidance and toolkit part of funding application criteria. This will ensure that all the essential elements of an inclusive play park, as stated in the toolkit, must be completed, or within the action plan, by the end of the project.
2. Ensuring that local people and organisations are involved in the consultation and design process, in ways which suits their individual needs. For example, by providing easy to read documentation and holding consultation events in accessible venues which have Changing Places toilets.
3. Proposing that a suitable procurement method is used when selecting play park designers which allows for:
 - a) innovation and the creation of new products, providing opportunities to meet local need as a result of the consultation process.
 - b) specific items of equipment to be requested to meet local needs (as opposed to being tied to one manufacturer).
 - c) a collaborative, relationship-based design approach involving local stakeholders.
 - d) a cost-effective method that ensures that the majority of the budget is spent on play park facilities and equipment, rather than on services and the process.
4. Putting an audit/validation process in place to check that the final project meets the *ADAPT my Play* guidance and toolkit criteria.

10. Disclaimer

The intended purpose of *ADAPT my Play* is to share the direct, lived experience of Mae Murray Foundation members. Combined with the expertise of PlayBoard NI, our aim is to empower others to create play parks which are genuinely inclusive to people of all abilities.

The information contained within the *ADAPT my Play* guide does not negate the need for the reader to comply with any regulatory or legal responsibilities and should be read in conjunction with any statutory requirements.

Mae Murray Foundation and PlayBoard NI will not be held responsible or liable to any party in respect of any loss, damage or costs of any nature arising directly or indirectly from information published within the *ADAPT my Play* guide.

Personal Stories

We are pleased that some families have chosen to share their personal experiences to help underline the need for and importance of inclusion within our play parks. We hope these stories will help drive the creation of new and progressive play parks which offer all members of our community a wonderful and valuable play experience.

Freddie

Freddie is quadriplegic and uses a wheelchair. He cannot stand up alone or bear his own weight and has grown too big to be carried. To move safely, out of his wheelchair, he needs to be hoisted. Freddie is clever and sociable but cannot talk, so people who don't know him well assume that he doesn't understand things. This makes him angry and frustrated.

Freddie loves to play just like any other child. The playground nearest to his home, where his friends and neighbours go, has a smooth surface for his wheelchair to move easily. But he can't take part in this place. None of the swings, slides or play units are designed for use by children who use wheelchairs.

A little further away is a large playground in a country park, which the park providers have described as an "inclusive" playground. Freddie visits to watch the animals in the nearby fields, but he cannot play in this playground either. There is just one piece of play equipment that Freddie can access in his wheelchair but this one makes him dizzy. He has no other choices. He remembers he used to be able to use the swing when he was little. Mum could lift him into the specially designed seat which supported his body. Even then, he had no other play choices.

Sadly, there is only a standard accessible toilet here, which doesn't meet Freddie's needs, so visits have to be short to return home to use the toilet. The lack of an accessible toilet, to

Changing Places standard and the lack of play choice means that this park is not inclusive.

If the family drives for about 90 minutes there is a playground which offers Freddie valuable play experiences, where he can choose what he wants to play on and which has accessible facilities for toileting and refreshments.

Freddie can get around everywhere. Whilst remaining seated in his chair he can choose to join other children to spin on the roundabout, bounce on the trampoline, or swing independently through the air on the roll-on platform. He loves to feel himself move through the air. It is his favourite thing to do here. There is a pirate ship with ramps up to good wide walkways that a wheelchair can fit on. Dials with handles, ropes with grasp points and some fancy electronic bits and pieces that create the illusion of water and replicate sounds and smells, can all be easily accessed. If you use a wheelchair like Freddie, there is a raised table, with knee space, for playing with sand and water, which he really enjoys. With accessible picnic tables and a disabled toilet to Changing Places specification – which means a decent hygienic bed for him to lie down on and a hoist to lift him from his wheelchair – Freddie has exactly what he needs.

Sara

Sara is autistic and enjoys playing as much as any child. Mum and dad want her to be free to play, without fear of judgement or discomfort. Affordability is key for Sara's family and safety is a prime concern. Their local play space isn't an option as it doesn't have a secure boundary, and the planting around the play park is thorny or toxic. It would be impossible to keep Sara within sight all of the time.

A bit further away is an inclusive public outdoor play space which is bordered by fencing and toxin-free landscaping. There is just one gated route in and out. Layout of the area is clear and predictable. Sara can survey all the equipment from a distance and engage on her own terms. An enclosed nook allows Sara to retreat – still in sight. A mix of vestibular and proprioceptive activities offer calming or active options. Sara loves to run, spin and be as loud as she likes – the higher the climbing frame, the better!

Beyond the structured pathways, in a quiet corner, is a more natural environment – good for loose parts play, sorting items and stimulating the senses. A decorated gazebo offers shade whilst casting shadows with changing shapes. Sara is fascinated by the water feature here. Each area has seating positioned to give mum and dad uninterrupted views to supervise their daughter in this safe and therapeutic environment. Here Sara can learn and explore through play, improving and developing new skills.

People visiting this park have positive attitudes towards diversity thanks to action by the play space provider. The inclusive aims of the park and what facilities to expect are well advertised. An activity led session, which Sara helped co-design, takes place every month with a range of activities which people of all abilities can do together – promoting diversity and creating opportunities for mixing and making friends.

Sara is growing up with a sense of belonging, happily taking part within her local community! And the community is learning new skills too!

Elaine

Elaine is registered blind with very limited useful vision. She was born with underdeveloped eyes and has light perception in one eye. Elaine explores the world by touch, learns Braille at school and uses a long cane for mobility. A new addition to her family is Ben, her buddy and guide dog.

Going to the playground is a favourite activity. Elaine loves swings and the feeling of wind in her face. However, none of the 10 play spaces in her large town are suited to her needs. Equipment without guard rails can be very dangerous for her and she might wander into the swing area and get knocked over.

The play space Elaine loves is located 30 minutes away by car but her mum does not drive! They take a bus, then taxi, to get there, taking two hours each way. They usually manage to visit once a month.

A 3D tactile map at the entrance, and tactile markings and surfaces throughout, help Elaine to understand where she is in the park. She likes to try to find play activities on her own and carefully explores equipment, taking time to consider climbing or using the slide. The plank piano and other musical interactive features are big hits! Elaine is getting older and more adventurous. Mum feels her confidence would be improved if Elaine could visit more often and practice taking balanced risks.

Ben is welcome in this park and the assistance dog corner with drinking water and a leash tie-up hook is usefully located near the amenity building. Ben is helping Elaine engage with other children. Not seeing others can mean missing a lot of social cues to play.

A local charity which supports blind and visually impaired people has linked with the play space provider and joint fun days are planned at the playground. Through games and technology, all children will get to experience the space as those with sight loss do. It is already oversubscribed! Elaine is looking forward to building friendships.

Glossary of Terms

Term	Description
Accessible Play Space <i>(as defined by Children's Play Policy Forum and UK Play Safety Forum)</i>	An Accessible Play Space is a space which is barrier-free, allows users access to move around the space and offers participation opportunities for a range of different abilities. Not every child of every ability will be able to actively use everything within an accessible play space.
ADAPT Framework	ADAPT (Access, Dignity, All-Ability, Participation, Transformation) is a framework, co-produced by Mae Murray Foundation's lived experience membership. The framework could be utilised to underpin inclusion in a range of different environments.
Changing Places Toilet (CPT)	Changing Places toilets are larger accessible toilets with equipment such as hoists, a screen or curtain, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers. To qualify as a Changing Places toilet, facilities must meet certain criteria and be registered on the ChangingPlaces.org website.
Children	According to the United Nations, the term children refers to those under the age of 18 years. However, as evidenced in our <i>Let me Play</i> study, play parks are important environments for many adults too. Good play provision will make children and adults of all ages and abilities feel welcome and comfortable in the space. Therefore, the use of the term 'children' throughout this document should be read to encompass all ages.
Inclusive Play Space <i>(as defined by Children's Play Policy Forum and UK Play Safety Forum)</i>	An Inclusive Play Space provides a barrier-free environment, with supporting infrastructure e.g. Changing Places toilet, accessible cafe, which meets the wide and varying play needs of every child. Disabled children and non-disabled children will enjoy high levels of participation opportunities, equally rich in play value.

Term	Description
Lived Experience	Lived experience describes a person's personal experiences, as well as the knowledge gained from these experiences. This document has been created by those who have experience of being excluded from the play park environment.
Play Value	Play Value describes the value an environment, object or piece of equipment brings to children's experience of play. A space rich in play value creates opportunities for a variety of physical, social and sensory play experiences. A play experience, or piece of equipment, will have high play value if children are able to play with it in many different ways, integrate it into their play or use it to expand on their own ideas and actions.
Risk Assessment	A process of identifying what hazards currently exist or may arise. A risk assessment defines which hazards are likely to cause harm to employees and participants and identifies steps to reduce these risks.
Risk Management Plan	A document defining how risks associated with play parks are identified, analysed, and managed.
UK Children's Play Policy Forum	<p>The UK Children's Play Policy Forum (UKCPPF) is an authoritative body made up of specialist children's play agencies from across the UK. The UKCPPF works to advocate for, promote and increase understanding of the importance of children's play, quality in play delivery and inclusive play provision.</p> <p>The UKCPPF works with the National Government, devolved administrations, local government and the voluntary, public and private sectors across the UK, operating as a collective voice for children's play. The forum seeks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a discussion and networking platform for those connected with play to contribute to the development and formulation of coordinated policy responses to governments and other bodies, especially where UK national policy affects all four nations. • Support members in working with and lobbying the governments of the four nations to achieve full implementation of Article 31 and related articles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. • Represents the diverse views that exist in play and playwork sector, including the play workforce; identifies consensus; and lobbies on behalf of the play sector thereby strengthening commitment to play.

Term	Description
UK Play Safety Forum	<p>Formed in 1993, the UK Play Safety Forum (UKPSF) is a group of UK national agencies which exists to consider and promote the wellbeing of children and young people by ensuring a balance exists between safety, risk and challenge in respect of play and leisure provision.</p> <p>The UKPSF plays a central role in promoting more balanced approaches to risk and challenge in play with a view to maximising the physical, social and learning based benefits of play for all children and young people.</p> <p>Working with National Government and devolved administrations, the UKPSF works across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, to examine legislation, regulation, policy and guidance with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining and promoting a more balanced and thoughtful approach to risk, challenge, benefits and safety. • Advising on policy and practice in relation to risk benefit and safety in places where children and young people play and, in particular, making such advice available to Government departments, agencies and regulators. • Reviewing and undertaking research relevant to the UKPSF's interests.

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