

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL - PLAY AREA
INSPECTION PROCEDURE GUIDANCE

Circulation List:

Parks and Greenspace - Technical
Health and Safety
Play Operational Maintenance Team
Community Park Officers
Park Rangers
Natural Heritage Officers

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1. Overview

To comply with their legal duty the Council must ensure that defects (including hazards) within all Play Areas under their control are identified promptly. The perceived risk associated with a defect will determine the remediation priority.

A defect is defined as something that is inherently dangerous and an action to mitigate, reduce or remove the danger may be required. This would include a climbing structure with sharp edges or equipment with loose boards which could seriously injure children if played on.

It is recognised that risky outdoor play is an integral part of childhood and that risk taking is good for children. Play areas are intended to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable levels of risk as part of a stimulating and challenging learning environment. Play areas will therefore expose children to the risk of minor and easily healed injuries such as bruises, grazes, or sprains but should not expose them to a significant likelihood of permanent disability or life-threatening injuries.

Three levels of asset conditional inspection help support the provision of safe and functional play areas:

- Routine visual, (currently) monthly.
- Operational, quarterly.
- Fully certified independent, annual.

Inspections cover the whole play area, not just the play equipment & surfaces and includes the active area (that area which is obviously part of the play area), nominally up to 3.0 metres around or other areas as agreed and includes ancillary equipment such as fencing, gates, litter bins, signage and seating.

2. Confirm Asset Register

All assets associated with play areas have been moved on to Confirm, a public infrastructure asset management platform. Confirm supports the tracking of assets and their condition within a flexible asset management register. Details recorded include equipment type, supplier, age, make & model, ownership, location, physical condition, inspections undertaken, defects raised, and repair & maintenance operations required/completed. Confirm allows for jobs to be raised as equipment is inspected and, through workflow planning, allows for those jobs to be directed to the relevant team.

Defects identified by the routine and operational inspection processes at given a risk level:

Low Risk: The defect is considered tolerable, but should a remedial action be identified, it should be considered. No time scale is applied to low-risk defects.

Medium Risk: The defect is considered tolerable, but should a remedial action be identified, it should be prioritised over low-risk defects but not the servicing of equipment unless the action quickly resolved. Action taken should support reducing the level of risk. A notional timescale of 6-12 months is applied to medium risk defects, but no target is set.

High Risk: Defects assessed as high risk require urgent action and are a priority.

Example play area data set:

The image shows two screenshots of the Confirm Enterprise software interface, specifically the 'Site' data entry form for 'Inverleith Play Park' (Code: PL1000).

Left Screenshot (Form View): Shows the 'Site' tab with various fields for data entry. Fields include: Code (PL1000), Name (Inverleith Play Park), Area (North West Locality), Ward (05-Inverleith), Category (PG: Play Areas), Type (Non Gazetteer Site), Locality (9999), Address (Inverleith Park Play Area), Naming Auth. (City of Edinburgh Council (Non Gazetteer Sites)), Contract Area (PG Play & Technical), Customer (PG Play Areas Team), Classification (PG Playground), Cost Code (PG38411), State (No Code Allocated), Surface (No Code Allocated), and Locality (Inverleith Park Play Area).

Right Screenshot (Table View): Shows the 'Site' tab with a table view of the data. The table has columns for Site, Additional, Start Date, End Date, Version Number, External Ref, Central Notes, Notes, Plan Number, Tolerance, Easting, Northing, and Altitude. The data row shows: Site: Inverleith Play Park, Additional: PL1000, Start Date: 24/03/2014, End Date: 00/00/0000, Version Number: , External Ref: , Central Notes: Old North, Notes: Import08122023, Plan Number: , Tolerance: 0, Easting: 324.372.00, Northing: 675.137.00, Altitude: 00.

3. Routine Visual Inspection

The routine visual inspections of play areas are completed by the park ranger team who have been trained to a play area visual inspection standard. This allows the identification of obvious defects caused by use, vandalism, and weather.

From June 2024 a monthly routine visual inspection for each play area will be recorded on Confirm. Routes are downloaded to mobile devices and inspections completed. At the current time the inspections are undertaken on paper so a historical dataset can later be migrated into Confirm.

It is recognised that best practice requires, as a minimum, a weekly visual inspection of each play area. While the process to undertake a routine visual inspection of play areas is being developed within Confirm the frequency will remain at monthly. Improvements in the inspection process and increases in park ranger resource, following the completion of an internal resource review, will allow a move to weekly inspection. It is planned for this to be introduced within the next 6 months.

Visual inspection assesses the condition of the play area and covers cleanliness, litter/debris, surface, depth & regulation of loose-fill, vegetation, graffiti, gates, fences and play equipment.

Defects noted can lead to several actions including:

- Resolved on site. Examples include the sweeping up and disposal of broken glass and needles, the regulation of loose-filled safety surfaces, the replacement of bolt covers and the removal of small areas of graffiti.
- A report on overflowing or damaged litter bins, detritus, and graffiti to requiring more specialist equipment the Waste team.
- A report on overgrowing vegetation / weeds to the Grounds Maintenance team.
- A report on damaged / missing equipment to the Play Operational Maintenance & Inspection team.
- A report on low levels of loose-fill safety surfaces and damaged to safety surfaces to the Play Technical team.

Defect assessed as high risk **and** considered likely to cause serious injury **or** have the potential to lead to multiple minor injuries requires immediate attention. The equipment and/or the play area will be closed (using padlock and chain) and a warning notice installed, or the defect will be made safe to allow the play park to remain open. On no occasion will a defect assessed at high risk be left without action to reduce the risk to a tolerable level.

4. Operational Inspection

Operational inspections are undertaken by the Play Operational Maintenance and Inspection Team who are trained to Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) operational inspection standard.

The inspection is a more detailed assessment and checks the operation and stability of equipment with a strong focus on wear and tear. It assesses cleanliness, equipment ground clearances, ground surface finishes, exposed foundations, sharp edges, missing damaged parts, excessive wear of moving parts and fundamental structural integrity. Each inspection is recorded on Confirm and the defects found recorded for action.

Defects noted during the inspection process can lead to several actions including:

- Resolved on site. Examples include the replacement of routine serviceable parts, minor welding/wood repairs and the lubrication of

moving parts.

- Ordering of and replacement of parts.
- Removal of equipment deemed uneconomic to repair.
- A report on overflowing litter bins, detritus and graffiti to the Waste team.
- A report on overgrowing vegetation / weeds to Grounds Maintenance team.
- Reporting of low levels of loose-fill safety surfaces and damaged to safety surfaces to Play Technical team.

The inspections are undertaken on an 8 to 12 weeks cycle as required in accordance with best practice.

Defect assessed as high risk **and** considered likely to cause serious injury **or** have the potential to lead to multiple minor injuries requires immediate attention. The equipment and/or the play area will be closed (using padlock and chain) and a warning notice installed, or the defect will be made safe to allow the play park to remain open. On no occasion will a defect assessed at high risk be left without action to reduce the risk to a tolerable level.

5. Annual Inspection

An annual inspection of play areas is carried out by an independent RPII inspector qualified to Annual Level. The inspection ensures the long-term safety of each play area and takes into consideration compliance with current standards and defects related to wear and vandalism. A written report covers each play area and its compliance with [EN1176](#) (the European Playground Standard). Recommendations for remedial actions are given together with risk ratings for each item and a detailed list of repairs required and the actions to be taken.

The Annual Inspection Report is assessed by the Play Technical and the Play Operational Maintenance & Inspection team who have shared responsibility for assessing the content of the report and agreeing the priority for action of all defects identified. This is recorded on the Annual Inspection Joint Feedback Report which is reported to management. Defect assessed as high risk are notified immediate to the Council who will assess and prioritise.

The responsibility for tendering and appointing an Annual Inspector is allocated to the Senior Technical Officer, Parks & Greenspace. The inspection is undertaken annually between November and January.

A risk-benefit based assessment of the condition of play area assets is undertaken. Risk scores are calculated by plotting the likelihood of harm against the severity of injury sustained. The likelihood and severity are each

scored between 1 to 5 and multiplied together to give a scale between 1 to 25. Scores of 1-7 are low risk, 8-12 medium risk and 13 and above high risk.

Low Risk: Defects assessed as low risk are considered tolerable, but should remedial actions be identified this should be tackled. No remediation time frame for low risk is applied.

Medium Risk: Defects assessed as medium risk should be considered for control measures to support reducing the risk.

High Risk: Defects assessed as high risk may require urgent action and are a priority.

The assessment process recognises that equipment may no longer be compliant with the latest standard and non-compliance does not necessarily mean that an immediate change is required.

Play Asset Risk Score Matrix

	Severity					
		1 Insignifi- cant	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Catastro- phic
L i k e l i h o o d	1 = Rare	1 LOW	2 LOW	3 LOW	4 LOW	5 LOW
	2 = Unlikely	2 LOW	4 LOW	6 LOW	8 MEDIUM	10 MEDIUM
	3 = Moderate	3 LOW	6 LOW	9 MEDIUM	12 MEDIUM	15 HIGH
	4 = Likely	4 LOW	8 MEDIUM	12 MEDIUM	16 HIGH	20 HIGH
	5 = Certain	5 LOW	10 MEDIUM	15 HIGH	20 HIGH	25 HIGH

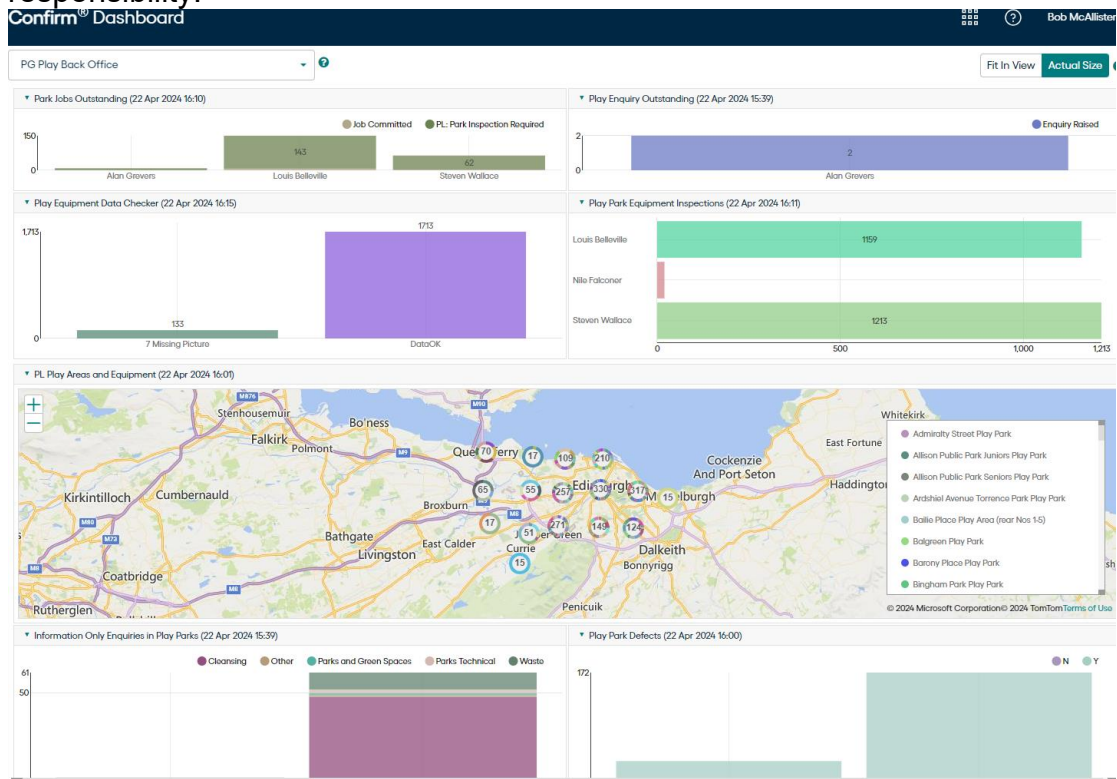
6. Performance Monitoring and Management Reporting

Confirm supports the performance monitoring and management reporting process. Reporting within Confirm is at an early stage of development and to date this summarises the performance of the Operational Maintenance and Inspection team. The dashboard (below) provides a summary of the following areas:

- Jobs Outstanding
- Enquiry Outstanding
- Equipment Data Checker
- Equipment Operational Inspections

- Enquiries Raised
- Play Area Defects

Each area offers a drill down option support identifying actions, priority and responsibility.



7. Play Incident Reporting

Accidents

Information about accidents brought to the attention of a staff member should be captured. The following accident details should be asked for from the person reporting the accident.

- Date place and time of accident
- Description of accident
- Type of injury sustained, parts of body affected
- Equipment involved
- Age and sex of victim and type of clothing and footwear worn
- Name of person reporting the incident and name of child involved
- Names of staff involved in the enquiry, who did what and when.

Ask for a contact telephone number or an address for the person reporting the accident and keep the member of public updated on what actions you have taken or will take to help prevent further accidents.

- Notify Play Operational Maintenance and Inspection Team and Senior Technical Officer to arrange for an inspection be carried out to ascertain the condition of the play area and carry out any repairs, if required, to make safe. Play Operational Maintenance and Inspection Team will lock the play area (padlock and chain) if repairs cannot be carried out straight away or they will immobilise the item of play and secure with a security type fence system.
- Play Area Operational Team will inspection and photograph the play area for the accident / incident report.

OUTWITH NORMAL WORKING HOURS

Notification of Accident or Damage out with normal working hours would normally be processed by the Council emergency telephone number 0131 200 2000 who may ask a contractor to attend the site or report the situation to staff in Parks and Greenspace on the next working day.

FIRE / VANDALISM

Information about fire damage brought to the attention of a staff member should be recorded, note date and time of fire if this information is available. If the fire is still burning dial 999 make sure you give the operator a clear description of the location of the play area.

Record Information on vandalism and contact the following people.

- Notify the Local Parks Development Officer and Park Rangers and ask that they attend to help secure the site.

- Notify Play Operation Maintenance and Inspection Team and ask that they attend to assess the damage and carryout any emergency repairs to make site safe. Workshops will lock the play area (padlock and chain) if repairs cannot be carried out straight away or they will immobilise the item of play and secure with a security type fence system.
- Notify the Parks Technical Team or parks@edinburgh.gov.uk.
- Parks Technical Team who will obtain a cost for the damage.
- Community Park Officers to report incident through Community Safety and Police.
- Parks Technical will investigate and report on the accident / incident. The accident details will be recorded on accident report held on G Drive Parks/Technical. A fuller report including inspection records will be provided by Parks Technical should a claim for compensation come in. This report will be prepared for the Council Insurance Section and will be passed onto the Council brokers to determine liability.