

Care For your Area Resources

Providing and Enhancing Local Play Areas

Durham County Council have produced a series of factsheets to encourage local communities to take action to improve their quality of life. The factsheets cover areas such as:

- Looking after the Environment,
- Using Fewer Natural Resources
- Meeting Community Needs
- Developing The Local Economy

One of the sheets outlines how to providing and enhancing local play areas. A version of this can be found below, it gives details of what to think about and how to go about establishing an open space. To find out more about the factsheets and more from the Durham County Council Local Agenda 21 visit www.durham.gov.uk

Providing and Enhancing Local Play Areas - Factsheet

1. Introduction

Play enables children to learn about themselves and the world in which they live. As well as being fun, play is essential for children's physical, emotional and intellectual development and in developing their social and behavioural skills. About one third of a child's time is potentially available for play and recreation.

Play areas can act as a meeting point for children's parents and grandparents - 'taking the children' is a frequent explanation for trips to a park. They provide a local facility to help keep local people in their community. Well kept play areas reinforce messages of the importance of maintaining a pride in the area.

Through thoughtful design they can be exciting areas which enhance the environment. Play areas that incorporate the needs of older teenagers can help alleviate the problem of crime and fear of crime that spread from youths 'hanging around' on street corners with nothing to do. Above all play areas are fun.

2. Reason For Doing It

- Provide local facility
- Enhance environment
- Provide play opportunities for children / youth
- Restore pride in the community
- Support child's physical, emotional and intellectual development
- Promote family life

Informal Learning Pack
Updates 2007



Care For Your Area

3. How To Undertake A Project

Gather Information and Support

- Discuss amongst friends and potential users - think about forming a group and raising money locally.
- Determine land ownership of existing site, or possible sites for new play area.
- Assess suitability of site in safety terms. Is it over-looked, near a road etc.?
- Look at play provision generally in the area. Will it be a honey-pot?
- Determine who maintains the land/playground now and who would accept responsibility in the future for new equipment? Assessment of existing playground required. Has a ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) inspection been carried out within the last year?
- Ask for help from local District and Parish Councillor
- Talk to other groups who have achieved similar aims.
- Approach organisations which can assist with funding applications or preparing designs.

Develop Proposals / Formalise Group

Develop ideas:

- Your group could organise trips to other play areas in the region. Watch children at play and ask them what they enjoyed. Ask children and parents what kind of play equipment they want.
- Determine what age group(s) the play area would serve.
- Seek assistance from other organisations to help with design / consultation

Obtain professional help to formalise ideas into a design with a cost estimate. This can be used to bid for funding as well as giving the group an idea of the costs involved. May be useful to look at possible phasing if not all achievable in one go.

Consider an artist's involvement, possibly working with the community, particularly children. Explore Arts funding.

For funding applications the group will probably need a written constitution and possibly a formal agreement between the various parties i.e. the group, the landowner, the consultant etc. The District Council may be able to help you prepare this.

Identify sources of funding

Think of ways to raise money locally, coffee mornings, table top sales etc. This demonstrates the group's commitment to the idea.

Implementation

Confirm sources of funding

Engage Consultant to prepare detailed proposals and obtain competitive prices, or if the Council are preparing the scheme, ensure you are consulted on the final design.

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What makes a good application?

Supply evidence of:

1. Your group - what do you do? How long have you been running? Why did you set up?
2. How do you know that the project is needed? Are there a number of children in your area who currently have nothing to do and nowhere to play safely?
3. Who will benefit? For a play area, it may be helpful to give a rough estimate of the number of children of the appropriate age who live near enough to use it.
4. Are there any similar facilities in the area - if so, how do you know there is a need for yours? Are the other facilities too far away / badly maintained / expensive to be useful for your group? If there are no facilities in the area, saying so will support your case to fund some.