

Redditch Borough Council

Inclusive Play Policy Statement

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy sets out the Council's commitment to providing accessible and inclusive play opportunities for all children and young people. It establishes standards and principles that will guide the design, investment and improvement of play provision across the Borough. It proposes an approach to achieve accreditation against the national Plan Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) standard for Arrow Valley Country Park and an assessment of the viability and resources required to also apply this to Morton Stanley Park. A process for incremental improvements for other play spaces is proposed with mechanisms to achieve this.

2 Definitions

The UK Play Safety Forum and Children's Play Policy Forum recommend these definitions:

*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.*

*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 opportunities, equally rich in play value.*

3 Context

3.1 Legal Framework

The Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010. This includes:

- The Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149);

- The Duty to Make Reasonable Adjustments (Section 20);
- Prohibiting discrimination against nine protected characteristics, including disability (alongside age, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

4 Vision and Aims

4.1 Vision

This Inclusive Play Policy sets out the ambition that:

“Every child deserves equal opportunities for play. We will take a planned approach to removing barriers that prevent access, creating play areas that meet the wide and varying needs of all children”.

The vision will be achieved by:

- Adopting a planned approach to removing and reducing barriers to accessing play;
- Creating spaces where disabled and non-disabled children play together;
- Sharing information about accessible provision.

5 Play Provision in Redditch

Redditch Borough Council has 44 play spaces across the Borough.

Strategic Parks

Redditch Borough Council has four Strategic Parks which typically provide a much greater range of visitor facilities and experiences and service a larger catchment. These are Arrow Valley Country Park, Morton Stanley Park, Brockhill Park & Batchley Pool and Overdale Park.

Each of these green spaces varies in terms of character, scale, and the visitor offer. However, Arrow Valley Country Park given its scale, range of facilities and central location is assumed to serve Redditch and act as a destination space for other areas of the Borough.

Arrow Valley and Morton Stanley Park both include 'Neighbourhood Level' play provision based on the Council's Play Hierarchy. Brockhill Park & Batchley Pool has 'Local Level' play provision and Overdale Park has no formal equipped play provision.

Redditch Borough Council Play Hierarchy

Neighbourhood Level Play Provision

- Serve children within 800m walking distance (approximately 10-15 minutes walking time based on national standards¹);
- Typically, a minimum activity zone of 1000 square metres;
- Typically, at least 8 types of equipment;
- More diverse play opportunities (including sensory play) for a wider age range.

Local Level Play Provision

- Serve children within 400m walking distance (approximately 5-10 minutes walking time based on national standards¹);
- Typically, a minimum activity zone of 400 square metres;
- Typically, at least 5 types of equipment.

The walking times cited above are presented as a guide, based on national guidance. It is accepted that some people included disabled people and children may take longer to walk the distances shown.

Appendix A contains a List of Council play spaces and their hierarchy.

¹ Based on a review of data from 1) Fields in Trust (2018) Standards Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard and 2) Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Standards and 3) The Chartered Institute for Highways and Transportation.

6 National Standards

There is a lack of national standards for accessible and inclusive play. Plan Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) is the UK's only independent accreditation system for evaluating accessible and inclusive play area design

PiPA sets out 3 core elements - Accessibility, Nurturing the Senses and Dynamic Play. In order to achieve the standard a formal assessment is carried out against 5 key areas:

- Plan to Go
- Plan to Access
- Plan to Play
- Plan for Rest & Recharging
- Plan for Engagement

The PiPA standard is an exceptionally high one as evidenced by only one play space in the West Midlands having achieved accreditation. Achieving the highest tier(s) against the standard also requires inclusive / accessible toilet provision. Currently, only Arrow Valley Country Park and Morton Stanley Park have accessible toilet provision.

There are significant constraints associated with achieving high standards of accessible and inclusive play within Redditch.

- The Redditch Play Investment Strategy seeks to renew, sustain and enhance existing play facilities;
- Scale of investment / proposed changes at each play space varies (and some play spaces will experience only minor change);
- Spatial and physical constraints – Local level spaces are smaller than Neighbourhood level spaces offering less opportunity for delivering accessible and inclusive play;
- Public open space – high levels of use, anti-social behaviour, vandalism and limited maintenance budgets means that many spaces have limited sensory play;

- Diverse and complex needs of disabled children – within small play spaces there is limited scope to address the needs and circumstances of all disabled children equally.

These issues are not unique to Redditch and are real challenges for all providers of outdoor equipped play. This play policy seeks to set out a pragmatic approach that balances a commitment to more inclusive play with real word constraints.

7 Providing Accessible and Inclusive Play in Redditch

To achieve the vision and aims of this policy, Redditch Borough Council will

1. Carry out an assessment of Arrow Valley Country Park against the PiPA standard and use the results of this audit to inform proposals for renewal and enhancement. The Council will then seek to achieve external accreditation against this national standard. Arrow Valley Country Park will be promoted to all residents and visitors as an exemplar accessible and inclusive play space.
2. The learning from the audit of Arrow Valley Country Park will be applied to Morton Stanley Park to establish the feasibility, viability and the scale of resources required to achieve the PiPA standard.
3. For all other outdoor equipped play areas, the Council will seek to improve the current level of accessibility and inclusivity of play provision.
 - To achieve this an Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist (Appendix B) has been created as a tool to assist with achieving greater accessibility and inclusiveness of play spaces and to record the impacts of the planned changes at the design stage.
 - The Council will require play companies / contractors to propose changes using this checklist that will increase the accessibility and inclusivity of play spaces. This will form part of the design brief and the tender evaluation criteria applied to the award of contracts.

Appendix A – List of Play Spaces & Hierarchy

Appendix B - Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist