



Secured by Design Award

Playing Areas

Playing areas have the potential to generate crime and antisocial behaviour and increase the fear of crime in the community. They are also vulnerable to crime, being spoiled and suffering damage, which is expensive to repair. As a result of this abuse the investment in playing areas, their use and their contribution to quality of life in the community can be seriously reduced.

The following check list highlights design and management features which need to be included in the planning of playing areas and in their design and construction which will help to block the opportunity for crime and anti social behaviour. The following features will be required for a Secured by Design Award for an individual playing area and must be resolved at the earliest possible stage of the design process.

Community Planning issues

- Show clear intended use related to age group. This should be considered relative to other local play facilities for other age groups in the community - it is important in avoiding potential abuse that all age groups in the community are provided for adequately and the need for youth gathering and socialising recognised with appropriate facilities included in a positive way.
- Provide adequate space for the activity proposed on the playing area complete with a buffer zone between the activity and adjacent dwellings and other occupied buildings.
- Relate intended playing area use to immediate infrastructure e.g. to allow adequate road, cycle/foot path access and secure parking nearby
- Locate play areas for young and very young children within the protection of the built community to provide adequate natural surveillance and supervision
- Ensure that ownership and management of the proposed facility is in place with adequate resource available for maintenance and improvements that will be required.

Play Area Design Issues

- Boundaries clearly defined with features to prevent unauthorised motor cycle/vehicle access
- Boundary fences and landscape to allow natural surveillance across playing areas from public areas, roads and footpaths.
- Lighting as appropriate provided to facilitate natural surveillance at night and reduce fear of crime
- Public rights of way through playing areas discouraged
- Control informal public access to playing areas to prevent dog fouling and littering of playing surfaces
- No structures or landscape feature to compromise boundary security providing climbing over points
- Natural landscape used for 'adventure' play shall have limited/ designed hiding places only with precedence given to clear natural surveillance and no opportunities for rubbish to accumulate
- Additional security features as necessary to reduce threat from particular local crime patterns
- The effect of other associated structures on play area security to be considered and taken into account i.e. public toilets, changing pavilions
- Youth gathering shelter designed in, avoid the provision of inappropriate unsafe youth gathering places

Management Issues

- Regular maintenance routines demonstrated, i.e. grass cutting, pruning, painting repair and replacement
- Use of play areas and facilities provided monitored and recorded including community consultation
- Crime and anti social behaviour patterns recorded and appropriate action considered
- Improvements and / or changes planned to block crime and anti social behaviour and encourage use

For further information regarding the successful creation of play areas refer to guidance contained in Six Acre Standard – 2001, published by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) see www.npfa.co.uk (publications).