

Refurbishment of West Park Play Area – Inclusive Play

Aims and Objectives

As with all play area refurbishments, Environmental Services endeavoured to refurbish West Park play area to provide maximum play opportunities for children of all ages and abilities.

Accessible Location

The play area has been designed to sit on a level, even base consisting of brightly coloured safety surfacing for ease of visibility, with tarmac circulation space. The play area is approached via a level tarmac path, through two wheelchair accessible gates. There is good circulation space between the equipment for ease of movement for all.

Background

When the Disability Discrimination Act came into force in 1995, play equipment manufacturers were faced with the challenge of re-designing their ranges of equipment to provide play opportunities for children with disabilities as well as able-bodied children. It was acknowledged that disabilities could take various forms, ranging from physical disabilities such as upper limb or lower limb impairments, to sensory disabilities including sight and hearing impairments, learning difficulties and autism.

Many play companies have now developed ranges of “inclusive” equipment, where individual pieces of equipment have been designed to be accessible to children of all levels of ability. Designs have been adapted to enable easier access from ground level, and provide features such as wider slides, open / supportive seating and wider platforms, giving parents and carers the opportunity to provide assistance to less able children. Inclusive equipment enables children of all abilities the chance to play together, reducing the feelings of alienation and isolation which could be encountered from using equipment designed for a specific level of ability.

Inclusive Play Equipment at West Park

West Park has been refurbished with a range of inclusive play equipment developed by Kompan Ltd, one of the world’s most respected designers and manufacturers of children’s play equipment. The equipment includes the “Supernova” roundabout which has won awards for its inclusive design.

Children can use the Supernova roundabout either sitting down or lying on their tummies, which enables an easier and less risky ride. It is a “multiuser” unit so family/carers can also participate with the children. The Supernova can hold a group of users at the same time, so that no one feels left out.

The climbing unit has been designed with several hammock style seats, with one situated particularly low to the ground for easy access by children who may be less able to climb, helping them to access the unit and be a part of the fun.

The see-saw has big handles, foot pedals and roomy seats to provide a comfortable and supportive ride. Children also tend to sit in the middle for a more gentle rocking motion.

The springers for younger children have foot rests and big handles for ease of use and support. One has a backrest and side panels for extra support, enabling the child to ride independently but still be safe and secure.

Conclusion

We fully accept there are items of equipment on the market that cater solely for children with particularly disabilities such as wheel chair swings and roundabouts, however our focus has been to provide equipment which allows children of all abilities the opportunity to play together .