Cymraeg

Q

Reopening children's playgrounds and outdoor play areas: coronavirus [HTML]

Reopening children's playgrounds and outdoor play areas: coronavirus

Guidance for those in charge of playgrounds or outdoor play areas to keep children safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

First published: 20 July 2020 20 July 2020 Last updated:

Contents

Purpose of this guidance

Requirements and responsibilities

Playgrounds

Owners and operators

Children and play

Coronavirus risk assessment for playgrounds

Key considerations for safely reopening playgrounds

Additional signage and communication considerations

Face coverings

Other related guidance

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance is for owners and operators of outdoor playgrounds. It includes the need for a COVID-19 risk assessment and provides examples of measures that may be taken to facilitate their use, while minimising COVID-19 transmission risk.

This guidance applies from 20 July 2020 and may be updated in light of medical and scientific advice, and as we learn more about the transmission of the virus.

This guidance draws upon the Welsh Government's 'Creating Safer Public Places: coronavirus' guidance which relates to parks in the wider sense as open green spaces, many of which contain playgrounds:

This guidance applies to playgrounds in Wales but it does not provide advice for the management of play areas that are indoors which currently remain closed.

This guidance is of a general nature and should be treated as a guide. This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities, and it is important that owners and operators continue to comply with existing obligations including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics.

Requirements and responsibilities

Persons responsible for playgrounds have a duty under Regulation 12 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (Wales) Regulation 2020/725 to take reasonable measures for the purposes of minimising the risk of exposure to coronavirus.

This duty includes a requirement to:

- 1. take all reasonable measures to ensure that a distance of 2 metres between all persons is maintained on particular premises
- 2. ensure that other reasonable measures are taken to minimise risk of exposure to the virus, in particular by limiting close face to face interaction and by improving hygiene
- 3. provide information to those entering or working at premises about how to minimise risk

The Welsh Government has issued guidance on what is expected under Regulation 12, and regard must be had to the statutory guidance.

This guidance supports owners and operators of playgrounds to meet these duties and should be read in conjunction with the statutory guidance issued to date. In the event of any discrepancies between this guidance and the statutory guidance, the statutory guidance takes precedence.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds generally constitute space containing outdoor structures designed for children to play in or on. They may include equipment such as slides, monkey bars, climbing frames, activity towers, swings, spring rockers, see saws and sandpits. They may also include areas of open space between such structures and so are considered to include the land on which they are situated.

Splash parks are also included; these are playgrounds equipped with sprinklers, fountains, nozzles, and other devices that spray water for children to play in.

Playgrounds can provide a safe place for children to play freely outdoors alongside parks and other open spaces. There needs to be a balance of risk towards supporting children's right to play by providing access to playgrounds whilst minimising the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Playgrounds, along with other similar structures such as outdoor gyms, were required to close in the initial stages of the pandemic. Their closure was required in accordance with Regulation 7 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (the Regulations).

In light of new and emerging scientific evidence these restrictions have been eased. This includes the lower risk of outdoor transmission, lower risk to children of transmitting the virus and lower risk to children of experiencing severe symptoms of the disease.

Owners and operators

Owners or operators are defined as those responsible for the management of a playground, including assessment of compliance with any relevant legislation or guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, local authorities, housing associations, private landowners, retail businesses, pubs and restaurants and school governing bodies.

Owners and operators responsible for playgrounds will have discretion over when they consider it safe to open for activity permitted by legislation, and may decide to keep these areas closed should they feel they are not able to facilitate their safe usage. It is recognised that owners and operators may require time to prepare for the safe reopening of playgrounds and they may open later than the permitted date of 20 July if additional preparation time is required.

Each owner or operator will need to apply this guidance to the facility they are responsible for, depending on the circumstances, layout and design. This will include taking account of factors including size, equipment, and how it is organised, operated, and managed.

Children and play

Playing is an essential activity for children. It is fundamental to their well-being, resilience and development and it is mostly how they exercise. Outside play is important as it encourages a high level of activity and contributes to a healthy weight for children. When given the opportunity to play outdoors children are likely to be physically active by running, jumping, dancing, climbing, digging, lifting, pushing and pulling. Playing outdoors contributes towards agility, balance, creativity and concentration. Children place great value on having good places to play and often regard parks and playgrounds as focal points within their communities.

Coronavirus risk assessment for playgrounds

Objective: That all owners and operators carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment which helps them decide whether the playground should open and what measures should be in place.

The risk assessment should:

- Be carried out in consultation with unions or workers. All employers have a duty to consult employees on health and safety, and they are best placed to understand the risks. Owners and operators should share the risk assessment results with workers before they are expected to carry out any duties in the playground.
- Identify the benefits to making the areas available for all users.
- Assess the risk for users; children, parents, guardians and carers, and also staff that are involved in the management and maintenance or cleaning of equipment.
- Identify the risks and relevant measures that could be taken to minimise them, recognising that it is not possible to completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Consider the unique make up of their playground and be proportionate. Playgrounds come in a wide variety of formats, some are small and may be a single piece of equipment such as a slide or swing, whereas some are large and incorporate a number of structures and different materials. Some outdoor playgrounds are in enclosed areas with fencing while others are not.
- A risk assessment is not about creating excessive paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control risk. The risk assessment will help owners or operators to decide whether everything required has been completed.
- Where owners and operators share the responsibility for management of a playground they should work together to ensure that the appropriate risk assessment is completed.

The Welsh Government is working with key stakeholders on the following tools that should help owners and operators carry out their risk assessments:

- example signage for playgrounds
- example communication with the public on personal responsibility

See further information from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on promoting a balanced approach to children's play and leisure.

Key considerations for safely reopening playgrounds

Key considerations for safely reopening playgrounds

Consideration		Possible measures
Risk assessment	Ensure an appropriate risk assessment is undertaken in the consideration of reopening the outdoor playground.	Ensure the risks identified as a result of the risk assessment are able to be mitigated and those mitigations are acted upon to enable the reopening of the playground.
		Document and record all risks identified and the mitigation actions required.
Preparation	Ensure playground equipment is safe to use and that risks from damaged or defective equipment are addressed before opening.	Safety checks on sites before reopening.

Identification

For owners or operators with multiple playgrounds.

Identify a programme for reopening based on unique characteristics of the playground. For example, size, location, likely footfall and level of need within the local area.

A list of parks and phased reopening timetable.

Communication with the community to explain rationale for the reopening plan including:

- advice on how the outdoor playground must operate
- the social distancing
- measures that are put in place there what play facilities
- will be available and what will not what is expected of
- users of the outdoor facilities (rules of use)
- whether hand washing facilities will be available and if not advise that all users bring hand sanitisers with them
- how the outdoor area will be monitored and
- maintained

Signage to:

- maintain social or physical distancing where possible in line with the current guidelines for adults and children suggest a maximum
- number of users suggest a maximum playing time during
- busy periods request that only 1
- adult accompany younger children for supervision

Limiting number of seats or swings available to promote social and physical distancing for parents, guardians or carers in line with current guidelines.

Larger facilities may consider:

- a queuing system and area
- booking system
- stewarding playgrounds or equipment

- encourage frequent and effective handwashing or use of hand sanitisers by users, parents,
- guardians or carers signpost nearest handwashing
- facilities indicate that the
- consumption of food or drink in the playground is not permitted
- request parents, guardians or carers dispose of all litter properly in litter bins provided, or take it home where a bin is not provided
- remind users of their own responsibilities in using the equipment

Ensure sufficient waste facilities and collection arrangements are put in place.

Larger facilities may consider:

- cleaning regimes for high traffic touch points such as playground equipment, seating areas
- on-site signage • social media messages
- website
- child friendly language and messaging on media children and families use
- messaging via schools and
- community groups local newspaper or radio

Communication Owners and operators have a duty to and provision of information

provide information about how to minimise risk or exposure to coronavirus. Promoting responsible behaviour by children, parents, carers in line with the social and physical distancing and hygiene and cleaning considerations above through general channels in order to minimise the risk of

Ensuring clear and easy to understand messages if play spaces are opened in a phased way.

exposure to coronavirus.

distancing

Social

Social or physical distancing is one of the ways of managing and reducing the risks of transmission and infection.

Persons responsible for playgrounds are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure that a distance of 2 meters between all persons is maintained (except by members of the same household (including an extended household) or a carer and the person assisted by the carer.

It should be acknowledged that adults and children with certain conditions will find social distancing difficult.

Cleaning and hygiene

Scientific advice suggests that the virus can Signage to: survive for up to several days on some hard surfaces, particularly when indoors. These risks are reduced when outdoors, where surfaces may be subject to UV light and rain. This guidance applies to outdoor playgrounds but the virus could survive long enough on frequently used or touched outdoor surfaces to facilitate transmission in areas where there is high usage. This risk can however be reduced or mitigated by the possible measures suggested.

Issues that are likely to be specific to this Children with Include any relevant information in additional group include: communication with needs ease of access to playgrounds for parents. children with additional needs • an understanding that many need Include in consideration frequent reminders about rules of around priority order for behaviour in playground settings parks to open. changes to familiar environments are This information could likely to require longer periods of adjustment be targeted at certain children with physical and sensory groups or individuals. disabilities may need assistance with moving from one place to the next some additional needs are not evident, such as hearing loss, and may therefore account for nonresponsiveness to verbal instruction at higher risk of being involved in bullying incidents Keeping staff Staff roles will probably include: Wearing gloves and apron for waste safe waste collection removal, cleaning or maintenance and repair maintenance. Where these are single use For larger facilities staff roles could include: items they should not be reused. Where they are multiple use items they cleaning playground equipment and surrounding areas must be cleaned and stored in line with managing queues of those waiting to manufacturers use equipment • stewarding equipment to ensure users guidelines. All items must be appropriately comply with rules made by the owner

> Unless staff are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is extremely high, risk assessments should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is limited.

or operator

disposed of.

Additional signage and communication considerations

Compliance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards. Further information on signage and communication is provided in our management of urban centres and additional communication, technology and regulatory considerations guidance.

The use of signage should be managed and removed promptly where it is no longer required. It should not contribute to waste left in the public realm.

Methods of communicating with those:

- with hearing or vision impairments
- for whom Welsh or English are not first language
- young children and children with additional needs, for example consider using pictures or symbols

Face coverings

The use of face coverings should be in line with current advice given by the Chief Medical Officer for Wales and the frequently asked questions guidance in relation to children, adults and those with additional needs. Currently face coverings are not required to be worn in playgrounds.

Parents should be aware that wearing a face covering in a playground setting could pose an additional safety risk and should use their judgement on whether their children wear a face covering.

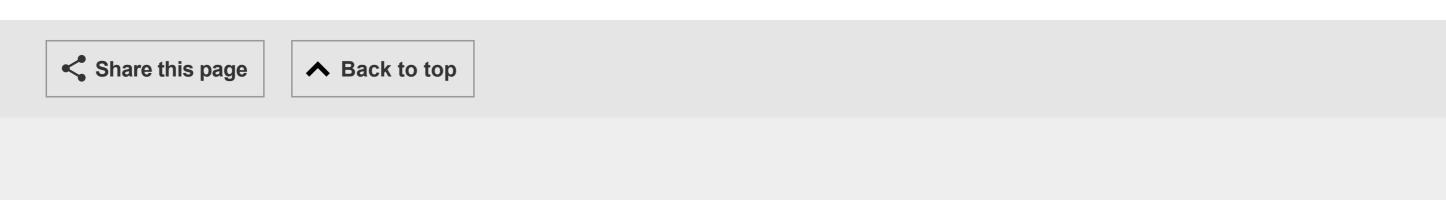
Other related guidance

- Providing safer toilets for public use: coronavirus
- COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings-UK guidance on **GOV.UK**
- Sport, recreation and leisure: guidance for a phased return
- Coronavirus regulations: frequently asked questions
- Taking all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus in workplaces and premises open to the public

First published 20 July 2020

Last updated 20 July 2020

Report anything wrong with this page



Accessibility Copyright statement Cookies Privacy Terms and conditions Contact us