

Inclusive Play Policy Statement

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Shirley Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes / No
Relevant Assistant Director	Ruth Bamford Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services
Report Author	Ishrat Karimi Fini Parks and Events Service Manager Ishrat.karimifini@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk 01527 881204
Wards Affected	Sanders Park & Hill Top (Sanders Park) Rubery South (St Chads) Side Moor (King George Vth Park) Norton (Lickey End) Other Wards: Alvechurch Village, Catshill South, Marlbrook, Rubery North, Wythall East, Hollywood, Bromsgrove Central, Aston Fields, Charford, Rock Hill, Slideslow, Hagley East, Belbroughton & Romsley, Catshill North, Avoncroft, Barnt Green & Hopwood, Drakes Cross
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Yes
Relevant Council Priority	Infrastructure and Quality of Life Priorities in the Council Plan
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet RESOLVE :-

- 1) That the Inclusive Play Policy Statement be adopted Appendix C;**
- 2) That the detailed audit of play provision at Sanders Park (against the Plan Inclusive Play Areas [PiPA] accreditation criteria/checklist) be approved;**
- 3) The proposals for Sanders Park be implemented within a 12-month period, strategic and local sites within the 24months.**
- 4) That subject to completion of resolution 3 above, authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and**

Culture Services to apply for accreditation for Sanders Park play area against the PiPA standard;

- 5) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to develop plans to make the play space in Sanders Park a District wide exemplar for accessible and inclusive play;**
- 6) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture to commission an assessment of the other strategic parks against the PiPA standard/checklist and to establish the viability of gaining accreditation;**
- 7) That the Design Checklist be approved as a tool for improving the accessibility and inclusivity of all other play spaces; and**
- 8) To NOTE that a budget bid of £500,000 in the capital programme has been submitted to pay for inclusive play improvements and for additional officer support.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Bromsgrove District contains 85 equipped play areas. The Council directly manages 40 of these sites. The remaining sites are provided by parish councils, developers and management companies and charities.
- 2.2 The 2024 Play Assessment showed that 81.7% of households are within a 10-15 minute walking time of an equipped play area. However, access varies by ward. Areas with the highest deficiency include south-east Lowes Hill, Lickey Hills, Wythall East and Wythall West.
- 2.3 In December 2024, Cabinet adopted the Play Investment Strategy with a commitment to investment up to £2 million in equipped play over a 10-year period. This investment will reduce deficiencies in play provision and upgrade existing play spaces, to accommodate the inclusive play.
- 2.4 This policy responds to the legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, which places an anticipatory duty on the Council to identify and remove barriers to access for disabled people.
- 2.5 The policy has been developed through comprehensive research of national guidance from PiPA Play, Fields in Trust, Sensory Trust, Scope UK and Play England, as well as review of emerging play sufficiency frameworks in Wales and Scotland.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The policy recognises that achieving high standards of accessible and inclusive play involves real challenges. Constraints include spatial limitations, public open space pressures, maintenance budgets and the diverse needs of disabled children.
- 3.2 Plan Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) is the UK's only independent accreditation system for evaluating accessible and inclusive play area design. The PiPA standard is exceptionally high. Only one play space in the West Midlands has achieved accreditation. Achieving the highest tier requires inclusive or accessible toilet provision. Currently, only Sanders Park and St Chad's Recreation Ground have accessible toilet provision.
- 3.3 The policy takes a pragmatic four phase approach that balances ambition with practical constraints:

Inclusive play will be prioritised at Sanders Park and other strategic parks. All remaining play areas will also be reviewed to identify opportunities to enhance inclusivity within the available budget.

1: Sanders Park – The Council will carry out an assessment against the Plan Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) standard and use the results to inform proposals for renewal and enhancement. The Council will then seek external accreditation against this national standard. Sanders Park will be promoted as an exemplar accessible and inclusive play space.

2: Other Strategic Parks – Learning from the Sanders Park audit will be applied to the other three strategic parks (St Chad's Recreation Ground, King George Vth Playing Field and Lickey End Recreation Ground) to establish the feasibility, viability and resources required to achieve the PiPA standard.

3: Other Play Spaces – For all other outdoor equipped play areas, the Council will seek to improve accessibility and inclusivity through use of an Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist. This tool will assist with achieving greater accessibility and record the impacts of planned changes at the design stage.

4. Play investment and Audit – The Council will continue to deliver improvements to play areas across the district in line with the priorities identified through the existing Play Audit and Investment Plan, over a 10 year period.

- 3.4 The Council will require play companies and contractors to propose changes using the checklist that increase accessibility and inclusivity. This will form part of design briefs and tender evaluation criteria.
- 3.5 The policy recognises that the Council has direct control of the 40 play spaces it owns and manages. The Council will work in partnership with other providers (parish councils, charities, community associations and management companies) to identify and deliver improvements for the remaining 45 play spaces across the district.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In December 2024, Cabinet adopted the Play Investment Strategy with a commitment to investment up to £2m in equipped play over a 10-year period.
- 4.2 The Council has identified that an additional capital allocation investment of £500,000 will be required to deliver the significant contribution of the proposed improvements and supporting inclusive play priorities across the district as highlighted through the recent audit. This funding is essential to ensure that identified deficiencies can be addressed comprehensively and that upgraded play areas meet modern accessibility, safety, and quality standards. Without this investment, the programme would need to be significantly scaled back, risking delays or reductions in the delivery of priority improvements across the district.
- 4.3 The additional £500,000 will enable the Council to progress a balanced and equitable investment programme, ensuring that facilities across all wards receive the level of enhancement required. This allocation will support the design, procurement, and installation of inclusive play features, as well as associated infrastructure improvements. The funding request reflects both the rising costs of play equipment and the need to create high-quality, accessible spaces that align with the Council's commitment to inclusive and sustainable community amenities.
- 4.4 The Council has undertaken a procurement exercise for the Play and Investment Plan on behalf of parish councils. Consultants will be commissioned to determine the investment programme across play areas and to support the delivery of inclusive play infrastructure.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010, which includes the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) and the Duty to Make Reasonable Adjustments (Section 20).
- 5.2 The duty is anticipatory. This means the Council must identify and remove barriers before disabled people encounter them. The Inclusive Play Policy sets out an ambition to exceed the legal minimum and to provide an exemplar play space at Sanders Park and if viable the other strategic parks.
- 5.3 The policy ensures the Council meets its legal obligations by embedding inclusivity into design and management of other play spaces from the outset.
- 5.4 The policy aligns with emerging play sufficiency legislation. Wales introduced play sufficiency duties in 2010 and Scotland followed in 2023. England is expected to introduce similar requirements through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill 2025.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 The policy establishes a clear framework for inclusive play provision that can be readily adopted or adapted under any future local government reorganisation arrangements. The standards and principles are transferable regardless of governance structure. This initiative offers a helpful "springboard" towards unitarisation in setting out the ambition for any new authority to build on regarding the promotion of inclusive play

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The policy directly supports the infrastructure priority in the Council Plan. The Council Plan states that parks and open spaces "provide green spaces where people and nature can flourish" and offer "opportunities for communities to come together, people to get active and for local businesses and initiatives to deliver activities and events."
- 6.3 The policy also supports the 'quality of life' thread that runs through the Council Plan. The vision aspires to "create a welcoming environment that prioritises quality of life, where residents and businesses feel a deep sense of belonging and connection."

- 6.4 Accessible play provision removes barriers that prevent disabled children and their families from enjoying play opportunities close to home. This contributes to health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.5 The policy supports the Council Plan's 'green thread' by promoting sensory-rich environments that incorporate natural materials and opportunities to interact with nature. This helps children develop environmental awareness from an early age.
- 6.6 Accessible play provision located within walking distance of homes reduces reliance on car journeys. The policy's focus on connected networks of play spaces supports active travel.
- 6.7 Play equipment procurement will continue to consider sustainable materials and suppliers with environmental accreditation where these meet the performance and safety requirements.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.8 The policy directly addresses equalities by ensuring disabled children can access high-quality play opportunities.
- 6.10 The policy takes a family-centred approach, recognising that disabled and non-disabled siblings should be able to play together and that parents and carers (who may themselves have disabilities) need good sightlines and access.
- 6.11 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The assessment concluded that the policy will have positive impacts for disabled children and their families by removing barriers to play provision. No negative impacts were identified.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The main risks and mitigating actions are:
- 7.2 Failure to provide accessible play provision would breach the Equality Act 2010. The policy mitigates this by establishing clear standards and embedding inclusivity into procurement processes.
- 7.3 Economic pressures could affect the investment programme. The policy's phased approach allows progress to continue at different rates depending on available budget. The policy recognises that existing sites may have constraints.

- 7.4 Officers may require additional knowledge about inclusive play design. The policy addresses this by requiring play companies to demonstrate understanding of inclusive play principles and by promoting consultation with disabled children and families.
- 7.5 Without clear policy, inclusive play provision may be inconsistent. The policy mitigates this by setting clear standards and requiring inclusive play to be specified in design briefs and assessed in tender evaluation.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Appendix A Bromsgrove Play Assessment site list (August 2024)
- 8.2 Appendix B Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist (December 2025)
- 8.3 Appendix C Inclusive Play Policy Statement (January 2026)
- 8.4 Appendix D Bromsgrove Play Investment Strategy (December 2024)

Cabinet

February 2026

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Shirley Webb	21.01.26
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Guy Revans	21.01.26
Financial Services	Debra Goodall	28.01.26
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings/ Jess Bailey	28.01.26
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Rebecca Green	28.01.26
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matthew Eccles	26.01.26