

Dublin City Council Parks, Biodiversity & Landscape Services – Play Development

Report: Providing Play Facilities for Children with Diverse Needs

Introduction

This report on accessible and inclusive play facilities managed by Dublin City Council's Parks, Biodiversity & Landscape Services, was completed as an interim update pending the proposed 'Play Sufficiency Assessment' commencing in early 2022. This organisational 'Play Sufficiency Assessment' is included in the Dublin City Play Strategy Actions Plan as part of Dublin City Council's commitment to support play for children and young people of all ages and abilities. Moreover, the play strategy includes related actions to ensure that Universal design and accessible and inclusive play opportunities are provided as much as is reasonably practicable and possible. The Dublin City Play Plan and upcoming Dublin City Play Strategy demonstrate the city council's acknowledgement of the value and importance of play and Local authority response to supporting opportunities for play. In particular 'Policy Statement 3 of the Play Strategy states:

"Place a Key Focus on accessible and inclusive opportunities for play for all children and young people."

Context

Please note that this is a desk based report which provides an overview of each play facility in terms of accessible and inclusive play opportunities. As DCC Parks & Landscape Services move forward in implementing the city's parks, play and greening strategies, the matter of providing accessible and inclusive play facilities will involve more in-depth citywide assessment as mentioned above and engagement with key stakeholders to form a baseline of standards for universal design in play provision. This will involve the exploration of possibilities for improved accessible and inclusive play facilities that involves sensory features e.g. aural, visual and tactile play elements as well as inclusive play units such as swings, seesaws and full wheelchair access where reasonably practicable and possible.

For the purpose of this interim report the focus is placed on play facilities and is guided by assessment with regard to the element of overall 'Play Sufficiency Assessment **"Providing for Diverse Needs"**. Dublin City Council aims to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together. This is in recognition of potential barriers for some children in taking part in the range of play opportunities in their area. This can be due to disability/impairments, children's own communities' cultural values or other environmental or attitudinal factors. The city council recognises the needs of children with a range of disabilities and the different access requirements to those with mobility requirements as follows:

Access

An access audit is the term used to describe a process by which the environment, a building or organisation is evaluated for its accessibility. An access audit explores and suggests ways of improving access. By understanding an audit, what an organisation does well and where attention needs to be focused for improvement can be identified.

An access audit:

- Identifies barriers
- Can reinforce anecdotal evidence
- Provides a valuable tool for prioritisation – quick , inexpensive, changing behaviour and practice

Inclusion

The principle that there is no discrimination against people and positive steps to ensure that all children can participate to the fullest extent. An inclusion audit is not a requirement but it can provide evidence that we have made every reasonable adjustment to remove barriers to inclusion as required by the Equal Status Act 2000. It must also be noted that accessibility and inclusion is not only applicable to wheelchair users and therefore a variety of inclusive play units located in DCC parks playgrounds are accessible and inclusive in terms of varied disabilities e.g. sensory experiences , movement etc. that can still be experienced by those with visual, sight and motor and intellectual impairments. For example, swings, sand, wildflower maze, balance posts, mound slide and tunnels may still be accessible and inclusive to children with varied impairments. It should also be noted that some inclusive swings (large units provided in images below) are recommended by manufacturers to only install at fully supervised settings. These matters need to be taken into account when assessing play spaces for access and inclusion alongside the challenges and limitations in sourcing and providing opportunities for play that have full wheelchair access.

Play Space Assessments

Enabling children to access play spaces helps them and their families to build relationships and neighbourhood networks that can bind communities and promote social inclusion. It is unrealistic to claim to create a play space in which every element is accessible for every child. Children will not all access the play experience in the same way as each other. For example, gates that are suitable for children using wheelchairs to open and shut can be too easy for children with autistic spectrum disorder who would benefit more from latches that are out of reach. What is crucial, is that children’s right to play is recognised, that they can access the experience of playing as fully as possible in their own way and that unnecessary barriers (social and technical) are removed. The key aim of assessment of play spaces is to identify access issues for a range of different disabilities and other diverse needs, such as rurality, ethnicity and other cultural factors.

Review of Current Provision:

The following review of current provision present data that will inform Dublin City Council and partners in further development of play opportunities that are accessible and inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together.

The RAG status column: Red, Amber, Green (RAF) status is a tool to communicate status quickly and effectively in showing how the city council is doing in terms of providing accessible and inclusive play facilities. The table below provides a *column that includes a RAG status column* whereby Dublin City Council can show its assessment of whether criterion for inclusive and accessible play facilities are not met, partially met fully met. These have been given Red, Amber and Green Status which appear as colour coded and text in the relevant column.

Red Criteria not met	Not Met	Play Area is not accessible and does not feature any inclusive play units
Amber Criteria Partially Met	Partially Met	Play Area is accessible and features a number of inclusive play units and some sensory elements
Green Criteria Fully Met	Fully Met	Play Area is accessible, includes a number of inclusive play units and features multi-sensory and specialist equipment

Criteria

The criteria sections included in the table below places particular focus on Matter B with regard to “matters to be taken into account” as set out in Wales Statutory Duty Guidance for the proposed Citywide Play Sufficiency Assessment for Dublin city.

The Following Criteria Column Headings: sets out available data and the extent to which Dublin City Council meets the stated criteria that reflects elements of inclusive indicators such as Freedom, Variety, quiet spaces, Social Experience (play with other children), Independence and access, sensory qualities, Equipment and Interaction.

- **The Evidence to support strengths Column:** provides the reason for the chosen criteria status and how the evidence is held.
- **The Shortfall column:** explains the areas in which the Dublin City Council does not fully meet the criteria
- **The Identified Actions:** gives a clear overview of how Dublin City Council complies with the intention and implementation of this matter. The actions are identified as set out below in addition to information provided regarding “Reasonable Adjustments’ and in ‘Examples of Best Practice’

FULL ASSESSMENT:

Full assessment required to assess and identify ‘Reasonable Adjustments’ and Identify additions of specialised inclusive play equipment as suggested in ‘Examples of Best Practice’’. Full assessment and feedback will be carried out with regard to proposed ‘Play Sufficiency Assessments’ as ‘Providing for Diverse Needs’ is a key matter addressed within these assessments. This overarching assessment will obtain feedback and assess and identify if required ‘Reasonable Adjustments’ and additions of specialised inclusive play equipment as suggested in ‘Examples of Best Practice’ - Note: Addressed within DCC ‘s Annual Playground Upgrading Programmes.

FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK:

Further assessment and feedback will be carried out with regard to proposed ‘Play Sufficiency Assessments’ as ‘Providing for Diverse Needs’ is a key matter addressed within these assessments. This overarching assessment will obtain feedback and assess and identify if required ‘Reasonable Adjustments’ and additions of specialised inclusive play equipment as suggested in ‘Examples of Best Practice’ - Note: Addressed within DCC ‘s Annual Playground Upgrading Programmes.

ONGOING REVIEW & FEEDBACK:

Ongoing review and feedback to ensure the play space is working well and where possible and practicable, identify any further enhancements that will ensure the ongoing sustainability of this play facility.

The following Table which provides an outline of DCC parks playgrounds in the South East Area with regard to their status in terms of accessibility and inclusion and proposed actions:

Providing for Diverse Needs – Assessment Table

No	PLAYGROUND NAME	LOCATION/ADDRESS	RAG STATUS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE STRENGTHS	SHORTFALLS	IDENTIFIED ACTIONS FULL ASSESSMENT
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						FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK ONGOING REVIEW & FEEDBACK
1.	Belgrave Square Playground (SE)	Belgrave Park Belgrave Square, Rathmines, Dublin, 6	Partially Met	Space wheelchair accessible 2 x partially inclusive play units 0 x wheelchair accessible play units	Space does not provide any wheelchair accessible play units. space does not provided access to natural landscape and /or multi-sensory opportunities to play in and with nature	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK Note: Pending commencement of upgrade for 2022 will address many of the issues identified to improve and increase access and inclusivity.
2.	Bushy Park Playground (SE)	Bushy Park, Springfield Avenue, Terenure, Dublin, 6	Partially Met	Space partially wheelchair accessible 10 x partially inclusive play units 0 x wheelchair accessible play units	No pathways provided to access partially inclusive play units	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
3.	Harold's Cross Park Playground (SE)	Harold's Cross Park Harold's Cross Road, Dublin 6W, Dublin	Partially Met	Space is wheelchair accessible 7 x partially inclusive play units 1 x wheelchair accessible play units	N/A	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
4.	Herbert Park Playground 1 (SE)	Herbert Park Ballsbridge, Dublin, 4	Partially Met	Space is partially wheelchair accessible 6 x partially inclusive play units	0 x wheelchair accessible play units Missed opportunity for support bars on sand play unit. Missed opportunity to install wheelchair accessible merry-go-round	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK

5.	Herbert Park Playlot 2 (SE)	Herbert Park Ballsbridge, Dublin, 4	Partially Met	Space is wheelchair accessible 3 x partially inclusive play units	0 x wheelchair accessible play units Missed opportunity to install wheelchair accessible merry-go-round	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
6.	Herbert Park Playlot 3 (SE)		Partially Met	Space is wheelchair accessible 3 x partially inclusive play units	0 x wheelchair accessible play units Missed opportunity for support bars on sand play unit.	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
7.	Hertzog Park Playground (SE)	Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin	Partially Met	Space partially wheelchair accessible 6 x partially inclusive play units	0 x wheelchair accessible play units	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
8.	Mount Pleasant Park (SE)	Mount Pleasant Square, Ranelagh Dublin.	Not met	Space is wheelchair accessible	Limitations on availability of space for additional inclusive play equipment Missed opportunity to provide access and inclusive play opportunities at lower level of multi-use bespoke play unit	FULL ASSESSMENT
9.	Neagh Road Park (SE)	Neagh Road Neagh Road, Terenure, Dublin, 6	Partially Met	Space is wheelchair accessible 7 x partially inclusive play units 3 x wheelchair accessible play units	N/A	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
10.	Palmerston Park Playground (SE)	Palmerston Park Palmerston Road, Rathmines, Dublin, 6	Partially Met	Space is partially wheelchair accessible 4 x partially inclusive play units	0 x wheelchair accessible play units	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
11.	Ranelagh Gardens (SE)	Parkview Ranelagh Dublin.	Partially Met	Space is partially wheelchair accessible	0 x wheelchair accessible play units	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK

				All natural sensory elements are partially inclusive 8 x partially inclusive play units		
12.	Ringsend Park Playground 1 (SE)	Ringsend Playground Ringsend Park/Irishtown, Dublin, 4	Partially Met	Space is partially wheelchair accessible 5 x partially inclusive play units	0 x wheelchair accessible play units	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
13.	Ringsend Park Playground 2 (SE)		Partially Met	Space is wheelchair accessible Youth space 3 x partially accessible play units Some elements of parkour Play Equipment is wheelchair accessible Chill out seats are partially accessible Accessible picnic bench	Space not fully wheelchair	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
14.	Sean Moore Park Playground (SE)	Sandymount Dublin, 4	Fully Met	Space is partially wheelchair accessible All natural sensory elements are partially inclusive 11 x partially inclusive play units 3 x wheelchair accessible play units Access to nature for multi-sensory play experiences	N/A	ONGOING REVIEW & FEEDBACK
15.	South Dock Street Playlot (SE)	South Dock Street South Dock St, Dublin, 4	Partially Met	Space is partially wheelchair accessible 2 x partially inclusive play units	0 x wheelchair accessible play units	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK

16.	Tranquilla Park Playlot (SE)	Tanquilla Park Rathmines Road Upper, Dublin, 6	Partially Met	Space is partially wheelchair accessible 7 x partially inclusive play units 3 x wheelchair accessible play units	N/A	FURTHER ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK

Next Steps

Maximising Resources

Play Sufficiency Assessments

This will be achieved by completing ‘Play Sufficiency Assessment’ which are planned to commence in 2022 as part of the Dublin City Play Strategy Action Plan. This is an the overarching assessment within which ‘Providing for Diverse Needs’ is one of the key matters to be addressed when assessing the play sufficiency of all of DCC Public Play Facilities. The assessment will involve a report and action plan. This assessment will also involve management of staff resources and identifying appropriate information and professional support in order complete assessments within a reasonable timeframe.

Budgets

Dublin City Council will work with partners and fully utilise existing budgets to support children’s access to inclusive play opportunities. The key aim is to prioritise and identify realistic budgets as part of the Dublin City Play Strategy to support securing ‘Play Sufficiency’ for Dublin city.

DCC Parks & Landscape Services Playground Upgrading Programmes:

As part of DCC Parks & Landscape Services 3-Year Playground Upgrading Programme and beyond. The issue of universal design that includes accessible and inclusive play opportunities is highlighted throughout public engagement, especially with children and young people and is included in all tenders and design briefs associated with new build and upgrading of play facilities.

Ongoing Consultation and Participation:

Continue to obtain the views of children and young people with regard to the play opportunities currently accessed, how they would like the community to better support them to play and what barriers stop them from playing

Continue dialogue regarding views on the play provision from parents, families and other stakeholders.

Analyse the information and have used it to inform future plans, design briefs etc. This matter was addressed within DCC online survey, pop-up play consultations with families and children and young people as part of the development of the Dublin City Play Strategy. To date the results of this public engagement has informed and shaped the strategy in addition to informing recent playground renewal projects.

‘Reasonable Adjustments’ where practicable and possible:

Ongoing work is required in order to bring the city council forward in the ongoing development of accessible and inclusive play facilities and opportunities for play that will involve the following and adaptable and flexible list of ‘Reasonable Adjustments’:

- Amenities:** Accessible toilets large enough for wheelchairs
Changing facilities for babies and/or older children with disabilities
- Signage:** Signage that includes appropriate contrasting colours e.g. black print and white and yellow paper/background or white print on dark blue paper/background
Signage that includes welcoming statements or an indication that the play space is accessible and inclusive
Involving children and young people in creating meaningful signage e.g. using photographs, art etc.
- Communication Devices:** e.g. Induction loop System which enables a hearing aid to communicate more effectively
Source Advice and support regarding supports for children with hearing impairments
Minicon Systems – supports those with hearing, speech impediments to use conventional phones
- Surfacing:** Ensure surfacing equipment is in good repair
Identify where practicable and possible measure to Create pathways that enable a child with disabilities to use the same route as other children
Identify and provide ramps where practicable and possible if ramps are required and provide
Identify works and source contractors who can install accessible pathways
- Quiet space or chill out zone:** Consider adjustments to overcome obstacle e.g. places to retreat to when things are too busy, open Spaces etc.
- Play Equipment:** Involve children in selection of appropriate inclusive play equipment
Identify where existing play equipment can be adapted for accessibility and inclusivity.
Research and identify where sensory and specialist equipment can be supplied and installed
Identify and provide specialist inclusive play units that are adventurous and challenging
Provide Shade and shelter where practicable and possible
Things that spin, things you can touch, contrasting light and colour
Natural materials in play areas e.g. sand, planting long grasses
The elements p water, fire, wind, earth
Different levels of height and difficulty

Bespoke Features: Invite or commissioning an artist that will work with communities in particular key stakeholders to develop bespoke element for the play area to as it gives the space a special identity for the children who play in it.
Children and young people and the wider community are involved in creation of bespoke feature/s

Partnership Working

Dublin City Council will identify key partners to engage with the process and identify any challenges in undertaking play sufficiency assessment with regard to 'Providing for Diverse Needs' through the development of local networks.

Local Area Inclusive Play Working Groups: Development of local working group made up of a broad range of stakeholders and partners required to gather information from those engaged. The group will work collaboratively to contribute to the development of inclusive play opportunities in each of their local area to ensure equal access at a citywide level. The working groups will work on the development of 'Providing for Diverse Needs' as a key matter included in the Overall Play Sufficiency Assessments which will involve the following actions as identified within the assessments and 'Reasonable Adjustments' as set out in this document.

To date meetings have commenced with local residents from Clongriffin with regard to accessible and inclusive opportunities to play at Fr Collins Park and local residents in the South Central Area with regard to the same at Eamonn Ceannt Park. However more extensive work is required in order to develop a comprehensive network of support and/or working groups in each of the city's administrative areas. The proposed working groups will be made up some or all of the following:

DCC Play Development Officer responsible for co-ordinating all relevant assessments

DCC Parks Superintendent/District Parks Officer

Dublin City Comhairle na nOg

Specific Voluntary Organisations that support children with diverse needs

National Disability Authority

DESSA

DCC Inclusion Officers

DCC Social Inclusion

DCC Inclusion Unit

DCC Integration Officers/Office

Voluntary Play Organisations/Youth Clubs, After School Groups

Local Councillors and TD's

Summary of overall Results for all 67 x Playgrounds – Based on RAG status

South East (SE) Parks District – 16 x Playgrounds

Not Met = 1

Partially Met = 14

Fully Met – 1

Thinking differently about accessible and inclusive play!

The following images provide an overview of examples of best practice in how local authorities can provide accessible and inclusive play opportunities for children with diverse needs. Some of these play units are provided in public playgrounds in many of the city's parks managed by Dublin City Council.

Swings



Specialist Equipment shown above – Inclusive Swings can be isolating for children and problematic for parents/carers due to availability of keys etc. Manufacturer's strongly advise that this type of swing should only be installed in supervised settings.



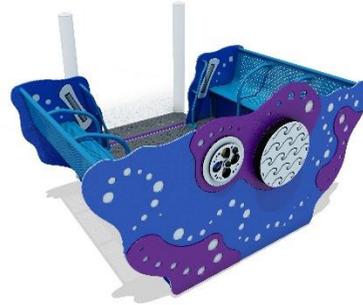
Large Multi-play inclusive equipment with access ramps etc.



Inclusive Zip Line – operated on cable



Stand Alone Inclusive Play Units



Order No. E.11000 Hexagonal Rocking Platform



Sensory play and access to nature – sound, touch smell – playing with the elements







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