

Summary of feedback on COVID 19: Guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms

Since the publication of the COVID-19: Guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms on 26 June we have received feedback from a number of stakeholders. We have at least 19 active and overdue MSUs on playgrounds – some of these can be seen in Annex A, with stakeholder feedback in Annex B.

Feedback gathered revolves around the following recurring themes:

- 1. Burden of responsibility:** The API points out that there are approximately 16,000 play areas in the UK, each one being unique and requiring an individual Risk Assessment. Local Authorities indicate that they will not reopen play areas as a result. Many stakeholders point out that the onus should be on parents protecting their families rather than on the provider.
- 2. Costs:** Banbury Town Council estimates that installing hand sanitisers will cost £30,000. Newton Pagnell Town Council states that the increased cleaning regime would increase costs by £54,000.
- 3. Enforcement:** Newton Pagnell Town Council states that parents are already lifting children over play area fences where these exist, and bringing sharpened knives to play areas to remove the cable ties that tie-up equipment preventing its use. In Keynsham there have been bolt cutters used to enter playgrounds. There are concerns that even if staff could be resourced to monitor play areas, they have no powers to intervene to ensure social distancing on safeguarding or legal grounds.
- 4. Impracticality of measures:** Newton Pagnell Town Council states that online booking systems would take too long to set up, majority of other measures often would require staff to monitor. This is supported by feedback obtained from Keep Britain Tidy and the meeting of the Natural England stakeholders. Two local authorities raise concerns that hand sanitisers, signage and other measures installed may be stolen or vandalised.
- 5. Staffing:** Banbury Town Council has 74 play areas, with 3 park rangers. Volunteers require DBS checks. Feedback also notes that the guidance is creating an 'unreal expectation in the mind of the public' that play areas will reopen this weekend, where site managers cannot achieve that until significant resource, management and maintenance in place.

The following areas were raised by stakeholders but require input from other areas:

1. Further clarity is required on frequency of cleaning
2. Further clarity on what kind of disinfectant will be effective for regular cleaning if play resumes shortly after
3. Costs of more frequent bin emptying, parishes are picking up the costs that are normally met by businesses (currently closed)
4. Implications of guidance on insurance. Keynsham Town Council have been told by insurance companies that being Covid-19 secure means not only signs about social distancing, using hand sanitiser and placing responsibility on the parents. But also need to ensure provision is in place for social distancing (hire in barriers to direct queues, use tape or white paint markings for appropriate social distancing).

The following area was raised by our stakeholders but we do not believe that it requires modification in the guidance:

1. Costs of removal of play equipment, multi-use game areas and safety flooring - this was not recommended in the playgrounds section and it is likely that the guidance was misread. *[Might still be better to take out but a DCMS lead]*