

Information for parents and carers

# Why Playwork ?

## Pitsmoor Adventure



# Playground

Free open access play provision

Read this leaflet to find out why & how we do this  
at our adventure playground



Pitsmoor Adventure Playground is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation  
Registered Charity Number 1156611  
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Why Playwork? was first created for play schemes and play projects managed by Manor & Castle Community Safety Project in 2007.

It continued to be used by Manor After School Kids Klub (MASKK) when running play provision in different venues across the Manor Estate, Sheffield.

Why Playwork? was updated in 2015 and again in 2023, providing information for parents, carers and anyone interested in understanding the playwork approach that we use when working with children.

We have also created a version that we use in L1 playwork training, 'Discovering Play' developed by Pitsmoor Adventure Playground and MASKK for Sheffield Play Partnership.

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# How we plan, prepare and provide play for your children.....

We believe children today do not have the same opportunities to play freely, in a safe environment and in the way that many of us were able to do when we were children

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We want children to have the opportunity to try out new play experiences, experience risks and thrills and learn what is safe and what is not safe to do

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We believe children develop self-confidence and learn new skills through high quality play experiences

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), approved in 1989 by the UN and ratified by the UK in 1991 set out the principles for the legal framework to underpin all aspects for the care, development and education of all children.

The Articles cover non discrimination on the grounds of gender, religion, disability, language, ethnic or social origin, civil and political rights economic, social, cultural and protective rights

Article 31 states

'All children have a right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.'

All our staff follow a playwork approach to ensure that

**'play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child'**

Best Play, What Play Provision Should Do For Children, NPFA 2000

1 Creating a good **play environment** is our starting point when we plan and prepare for play. This involves not only what you see, but also what you can feel.

- \* clean, well ventilated & warm premises
- \* clear, attractive & up to date notice boards
- \* attractive layout
- \* accessible facilities
- \* lots of interesting play opportunities
- \* plenty to do - indoors and outdoors
- \* a place where children are safe from bullying or abuse
- \* friendly & welcoming staff
- \* play opportunities that are inclusive, regardless of age, abilities, gender, ethnicity or culture
- \* activities that take risks & test boundaries



2 We recognise that it is important for children to play without interruption, to be in control of what they do, and develop self-confidence and independence.

To do this we set up **play spaces** that stimulate children's imagination and ensure that children have access to resources and equipment without having to ask an adult.

Both indoors and outdoors some play spaces are **permanent** and set out at every session, children know where things are kept and quickly become involved.

Other play spaces are **temporary**, these are flexible to enable new or different play opportunities to take place.

We have a variety of resources that children can use in many ways, these may be empty boxes, tubes, materials, old curtains etc, in fact anything interesting that can be reused in different ways

In playwork these are known as **loose parts** which children are able to move around, to build and create a variety of items, structures or ways to play.

3 Children benefit from play in a **natural outdoor environment** as it stimulates high levels of physical active play, stimulating children's imagination and a sense of place and wonder.

Our aim is to provide play opportunities that enable children

- to be physical,
- to be creative,
- to be expressive,
- to use their imagination
- to be noisy
- to be quiet,
- to experiment and take risks.

We use all the facilities in the area that are available to us to do this to ensure children have access to an **enriched play environment**.

We make full use of the **outdoor area** beyond the boundary of the adventure playground. This provides a natural or 'wild' environment with opportunities to build dens, climb trees, collect objects, explore and experience play in different weather conditions.

4 To find out what children want, we use different methods such as questionnaires, pictures,, treasure boxes, smiley faces.

We use games and activities to encourage them to share their views and opinions and participate in the decision making process.

As well as making sure we are providing what children want, **consultation and participation** enables children to express their feelings and develop their confidence and self esteem.

An important part of the playworker's role is to observe children playing. This can be to make on the spot **risk assessments** to ensure that any risks are minimised straight away and children are safe from harm.

Another purpose of **observations** is to recognise how children are playing, how they use the space and resources. This can help us to identify future play requirements for the playground as a whole but also for individual children.

Overall we aim to create a play environment that will provide children with a high quality **child centred** play experience that combines a balance of child led play with new experiences and fosters respect for others and the wider community.





So here's a little bit of theory.....

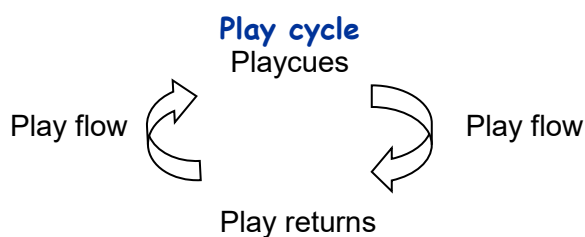
- 5 Our playworkers use **play cues** to know when children want them to respond to what they are doing; it can include the playworker joining in, providing equipment or giving suggestions.

Sometimes the play cue is a straightforward request however playworkers need to develop good listening and body language skills so that by picking up on clues, such as facial expressions, within children's play cues they are able to respond appropriately.

Play cues are part of the **play cycle**, for example, a group of children are playing with a ball which rolls towards a child or the playworker,

- the children may shout and wave their arms to indicate for the ball to be kicked back to them (**play cue**),
- the child or playworker kicks the ball back (**play return**) which the children will then respond to.

Depending on the nature of the responses play may develop and maintain the **play flow** until the play cycle is completed.



Taken from Anne Davy & Jane Gallagher, 2006  
P10&11New Playwork, 4th edition

**The playwork approach is based on a set of values and playwork principles that underpins everything we do at Pitsmoor Adventure Playground**

**As an organisation we aim to provide play opportunities and evaluate what we do using the 7 play objectives set out in**

**'Best Play—What Play Provision Should Do For Children'**

**The playwork principles**

- \* All children need to play. Play is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities
- \* Play is a process that is freely chosen, children determine and control the content and intent of their play by following their own ideas in their own way for their own reasons
- \* The prime focus of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process
- \* The play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult-led agendas
- \* The role of the playworker is to support all children in the creation of a space in which they can play
- \* Playworkers response to play is based on sound, up-to-date knowledge of the play process & reflective practice
- \* Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and the impact of children's play on the playworker
- \* Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children to extend their play and balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children

**The 7 play objectives**

- \* We extend the choice and control children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it
- \* We recognise the child's need to test boundaries and respond positively to that need
- \* We balance the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm
- \* We aim to maximise the range of play opportunities available for children
- \* We foster and encourage children's independence and self-esteem
- \* We foster and encourage children to respect others and offer opportunities for social interaction
- \* We foster children's well-being, healthy growth & development, knowledge & understanding, creativity and capacity to learn

**If you want to know more about play & playwork you may find the following websites and publications useful**

[www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk) Childrens Rights & Responsibilities  
A summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

[www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk) Best Play What Play Provision Should Do For Children  
Published by NPFA/Playlink/Children's Play Council & Dept. of Culture, Media and Sport, 2000

The Buskers Guides to..... series published by Common Threads

Playwork	Shelly Newstead, 2004	Behaviour	Shelly Newstead 2005
Inclusion	Philip Douch, 2005	Playing Out	Philip Waters, 2006
Risk	Shelly Newstead, 2008	Anti-Discriminatory Practice	- Shelly Newstead, 2006