

ESP

Play with purpose



Maintenance Guide



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1. Introduction

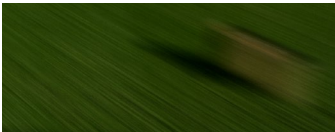
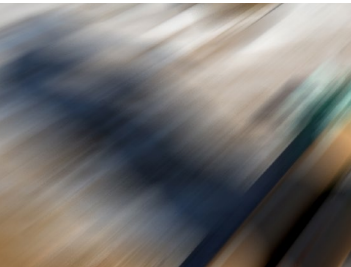
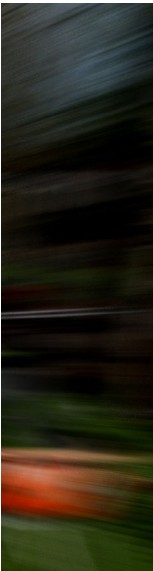
ESP is a specialist manufacturer and installer of playground equipment, providing high-quality play environments for public open spaces, schools, and community areas across the United Kingdom. The play areas installed by ESP are accessed by members of the public, including children aged 1 to 17 years, and in many cases by accompanying adults. The safety and welfare of all users is of paramount importance.

This document has been produced by ESP to provide clear, structured, and enforceable maintenance and inspection guidance to all parties responsible for the ongoing management of play areas where ESP Play equipment has been installed. It is the responsibility of the site owner or managing authority, typically the local authority or council, to ensure that all maintenance, inspection, and remediation activities described herein are carried out diligently and in a timely manner.

This document also serves to formally set out the obligations of the site managing authority and to protect the commercial and legal position of ESP. Failure to follow the guidance contained within this document may result in voidance of any warranty provided by ESP and may expose the managing authority to significant legal and financial liability.

Standards Compliance

All playground equipment supplied and installed by ESP is manufactured in compliance with EN 1176:2017 (Playground Equipment and Surfacing - General Safety Requirements and Test Methods) and EN 1177:2018 (Impact Attenuating Playground Surfacing). Ongoing compliance with these standards is contingent upon the site owner conducting and maintaining a consistent programme of inspection and maintenance.





2. Legislative & Standards Framework

2.1 EN 1176 — Playground Equipment & Surfacing

EN 1176 is the primary European standard governing the design, manufacture, installation, inspection, and maintenance of playground equipment. It applies to all publicly accessible play areas, including those managed by local authorities and councils. The standard is multi-part and covers, amongst other matters:

- General safety requirements and test methods (Part 1)
- Specific requirements for swings, slides, carousels, aerial ropeways, and other equipment types (Parts 2–7 and Part 11)
- Fully enclosed play equipment (Part 10)
- Age-appropriate design and risk management principles
- Requirements for regular inspection and maintenance by competent persons

EN 1176 does not mandate a prescriptive inspection timetable in isolation, instead it defines three distinct levels of inspection, each intended to be carried out at different intervals and by persons with different levels of competence. These are set out in detail in Section 4 of this document.

2.2 EN 1177 — Impact Attenuating Surfacing

EN 1177 governs the performance requirements and test methods for impact attenuating surfaces used beneath and around playground equipment. The purpose of this standard is to minimise the risk of serious head injury resulting from a fall from equipment. It establishes Critical Fall Height (CFH) requirements, and all surfacing installed by ESP is tested and certified to meet EN 1177 requirements at the time of installation.

Ongoing compliance with EN 1177 depends entirely upon the condition of the surfacing being maintained. Loose-fill surfaces (such as rubber mulch or wood chip) require regular topping-up and raking to preserve CFH performance. Unitary rubber surfaces must be inspected for damage, displacement, or deterioration. Any change in surface condition that reduces impact attenuation performance represents a safety-critical failure that must be rectified immediately.

2.3 Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Associated Regulations

Local authorities and councils managing publicly accessible play areas are subject to a general duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations, including the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999. These duties require the managing authority to:

- Conduct suitable and sufficient risk assessments of all play areas
- Implement and maintain appropriate control measures to manage identified risks
- Keep records of risk assessments, inspections, and maintenance activities
- Ensure that persons carrying out inspections are competent to do so

2.4 Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 & 1984

The managing authority, as occupier of the play area, owes a duty of care to all lawful visitors (including members of the public and children) under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957. Failure to maintain equipment and surfacing to a safe standard, including failure to conduct regular inspections, may give rise to a claim for negligence or breach of statutory duty. ESP expressly draws the attention of the managing authority to this obligation and confirms that any claim arising from failure to maintain the site in accordance with this guidance will be the sole responsibility of the managing authority.

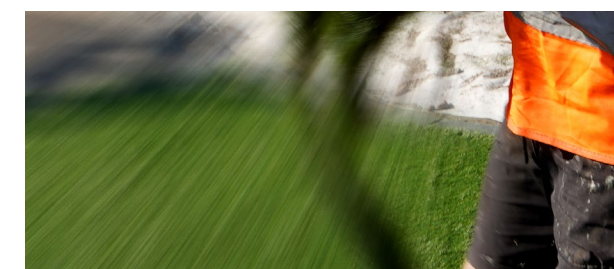
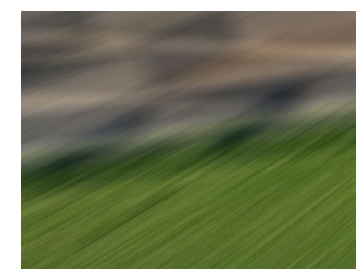
3. Responsibilities of the Managing Authority

Upon practical completion and handover of a play area installed by ESP, the site managing authority assumes full responsibility for the ongoing safety, maintenance, and compliance of the installation. This includes but is not limited to:

1. Establishing and implementing a documented maintenance and inspection programme consistent with the requirements of EN 1176, EN 1177, and this guidance document.
2. Ensuring that all routine inspections are carried out by suitably competent and trained individuals.
3. Ensuring that annual inspections are conducted by a fully qualified RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) inspector.
4. Maintaining a complete and up-to-date record of all inspections, maintenance activities, and remedial works carried out.
5. Acting promptly and decisively upon any defects, hazards, or non-conformances identified during inspection or maintenance.
6. Ensuring that any defective or hazardous equipment or surfacing is taken out of use immediately and remains closed until safe.
7. Not making any modifications, alterations, or additions to ESP equipment without prior written consent from ESP.
8. Reporting to ESP any structural defects or failures that may be attributable to manufacturing or installation within the warranty period.

Important - Liability

ESP's liability is strictly limited to the equipment and surfacing as supplied and installed. Any failure by the managing authority to conduct inspections and maintenance in accordance with this document, EN 1176, and EN 1177 will void any warranty provided by ESP and will result in ESP declining to accept any liability for injuries or incidents occurring at the site.





4. Inspection Types, Frequencies & Requirements

EN 1176 defines three levels of inspection for playground equipment. Each serves a distinct purpose and should be regarded as complementary, no single level of inspection is sufficient in isolation. All three must form part of a documented, ongoing programme.

4.1 Routine Visual Inspection

The routine visual inspection is an ongoing, frequent check intended to identify obvious hazards that arise from use, vandalism, weather conditions, or other short-term factors. It is the first line of defence against immediate safety risks.

Recommended Frequency: Daily to weekly, depending on the intensity of use, location, and seasonal factors. Sites with high footfall or those in areas prone to vandalism should be inspected daily.

Conducted by: A designated site officer, parks operative, or grounds maintenance operative. Formal RPII qualification is not required, but the person must be trained to identify obvious hazards and empowered to take immediate action.

The routine visual inspection should cover as a minimum:

- Evidence of vandalism, deliberate damage, or fire damage
- Broken, cracked, or missing components
- Sharp edges, exposed fixings, or protrusions that could cause injury
- Accumulation of foreign objects including glass, syringes, litter, or animal fouling
- Condition of surfacing, including any displacement of loose-fill materials
- Presence of water pooling or ice that may create a slip hazard
- Evidence of graffiti, particularly offensive or hazardous content
- Condition of perimeter fencing and access gates

All findings must be recorded in writing using the site's inspection log. Any immediate safety hazard must result in the affected equipment being taken out of use without delay, with clear signage in place, and the defect reported to the responsible officer for urgent remediation.

4.2 Operational Inspection

The operational inspection is a more detailed check of the overall condition of the equipment and surfacing. It is intended to identify hazards that may not be visible to the naked eye at first glance, and to assess the effects of wear, weathering, and use over time.

Recommended Frequency: Monthly, or every one to three months for lower-use sites.

Conducted by: A trained and competent individual with a sound knowledge of playground equipment, EN 1176 requirements, and hazard identification. RPII qualification is strongly recommended, though not mandated at this level.

The operational inspection should include, in addition to all routine visual inspection checks:

- Checking and tightening of all visible fixings, bolts, and connectors
- Assessment of wear on high-use components such as swing bearings, chain links, and pivot points
- Checking of rope and cable components for fraying, weakening, or UV degradation
- Examination of timber components for splitting, decay, or insect damage
- Assessment of surface depths of loose-fill impact attenuating surfaces (raking and topping-up where necessary)
- Checking of drainage channels and outlets for blockage
- Assessment of the condition of paint, coatings, and anti-corrosion treatments
- Inspection of perimeter barriers and signage

Full written records of each operational inspection must be retained. Defects identified during operational inspections must be categorised by severity and addressed within appropriate timeframes.

Safety-critical defects must be treated with the same urgency as immediate hazards identified during routine inspection.

4.3 Annual Main Inspection (RPII)

RPII Annual Inspection — ESP's Strong Recommendation

Where a managing authority fails to commission an annual RPII inspection, ESP will not accept any liability for injuries, incidents, or equipment failures that occur thereafter. The absence of a current annual inspection report will be considered evidence of failure to maintain the site to the required standard. This position may be relied upon by ESP Play in any legal proceedings or insurance claim arising from the site.

The annual main inspection is a thorough, in-depth assessment of the entire installation carried out by a fully qualified inspector registered with the Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII). RPII inspectors are assessed to national standards and are required to demonstrate competence in playground inspection methodology, EN 1176 and EN 1177 requirements, risk assessment, and report writing.

Recommended Frequency: Annually conducted on or near the anniversary of the installation completion date. This timing is strongly recommended by ESP Play as it aligns the formal compliance review with the original handover baseline and ensures a consistent, comparable record of the site's condition over time.

Conducted by: A fully qualified RPII Annual Inspector, independent of the managing authority and the installation contractor. Inspectors may be verified via

the RPII website at www.rpii.co.uk. The annual main inspection encompasses a comprehensive assessment including:

- Full examination of all structural elements of each piece of equipment
- Assessment of all fixings, foundations, and ground anchors, including sub-surface inspection where appropriate
- Testing of impact attenuating surfacing for compliance with EN 1177 Critical Fall Height requirements
- Assessment of all entrapment, entanglement, and fall hazards
- Review of all inspection and maintenance records since the previous annual inspection
- A formal written report with findings, risk ratings, and recommended actions with timescales
- Certification of the overall compliance status of the installation

Failure to Commission Annual RPII Inspection

Where a managing authority fails to commission an annual RPII inspection, ESP will not accept any liability for injuries, incidents, or equipment failures that occur thereafter. The absence of a current annual inspection report will be considered evidence of failure to maintain the site to the required standard. This position may be relied upon by ESP Play in any legal proceedings or insurance claim arising from the site.

Inspection Type	Frequency	Who	Standard
Routine Visual Inspection	Daily / Weekly	Designated Site Officer	EN 1176 Annex A
Operational Inspection	Monthly	Trained Competent Person	EN 1176 Annex A
Annual Main Inspection	Annually (RPII)	RPII Qualified Inspector	EN 1176 Annex A & EN 1177
Post-Incident Inspection	Immediately after incident	RPII Inspector (recommended)	EN 1176
Post-Vandalism Inspection	Prior to re-opening	Trained Competent Person	EN 1176



5. Maintenance Cycles & Programmes

Inspection alone is not sufficient to maintain play area safety. A proactive, scheduled maintenance programme must run alongside the inspection regime. Maintenance activities should be carried out by competent operatives with appropriate training, tools, and access to genuine replacement parts approved by ESP.

5.1 Weekly Maintenance Tasks

- Removal of litter, glass, and debris from all play areas and surfacing
- Removal of animal fouling (particularly dog and fox excrement)
- Wiping down of play equipment surfaces, particularly slides and handles
- Raking of loose-fill impact attenuating surfaces to maintain even depth and coverage
- Checking and resetting of any self-closing gate mechanisms
- Removal of graffiti, particularly that which is offensive or which contains telephone numbers, web addresses, or other content that could endanger children

5.2 Monthly Maintenance Tasks

- Tightening of all accessible fixings and bolts, refer to manufacturer specifications
- Lubrication of moving parts including swing bearings, pivot points, and hinges using appropriate food-safe or child-safe lubricants
- Inspection and maintenance of drainage systems within the play area perimeter
- Checking of timber for surface splits, crazing of coatings, and signs of moisture ingress

Component

Swing seats (belt/cradle)
Swing chains and connectors
Rope nets and climbing ropes
Swing and pivot bearings
Loose-fill surfacing (rubber mulch / wood chip)
Unitary rubber surfacing
Timber decking and components
Safety signage

Indicative Replacement Interval

3–5 years or on visible degradation
5–7 years or as identified by inspection
5–7 years or as identified by inspection
As identified at annual inspection
Top-up annually; full replacement 5–7 years
10–15 years subject to condition
As identified by inspection; retreated annually
Replace when faded, damaged, or illegible

These intervals are indicative only. Actual replacement requirements will be determined by the findings of inspections and are influenced by intensity of use, environmental conditions, and the quality of ongoing maintenance. Only genuine ESP Play approved replacement components must be used. Use of non-approved parts will void the warranty and may compromise equipment safety.

- Assessment of plastic components for UV degradation, cracking, or fading
- Topping-up of loose-fill surfacing to maintain required depth in fall zones
- Checking and re-tensioning of rope and net components

5.3 Annual Maintenance Tasks

- Full retreatment of timber components with appropriate wood preservative and UV-resistant coating if applicable.
- Repainting or re-coating of metalwork where required to prevent corrosion
- Replacement of worn or degraded components identified during the annual inspection, using only ESP approved replacement parts
- Professional cleaning of all equipment surfaces
- Comprehensive assessment and, where necessary, replacement of impact attenuating surfacing
- Replacement of all safety signage that is damaged, faded, or illegible
- Checking and testing of all perimeter fencing, gates, and latches

5.4 Component End-of-Life & Replacement

All playground equipment components have finite service lives. The managing authority must be aware that components including rope, chain, swing seats, bearings, and surfacing materials will require periodic replacement regardless of their visual appearance. ESP recommends that the following indicative replacement intervals are incorporated into the maintenance plan:

6. Weed Control & Vegetation Management

Effective weed control and vegetation management is a critical – yet frequently underestimated – element of play area maintenance. Unchecked weed growth represents both a safety hazard and a significant risk to the long-term structural integrity of the installation. The managing authority must establish and maintain a regular programme of weed control and vegetation management as part of its wider maintenance regime.

6.1 Why Weed Control Matters

Weed and vegetation growth in and around playground equipment and surfacing can cause the following serious risks:

- Vegetation growing through or beneath impact attenuating surfacing can degrade surface performance and reduce Critical Fall Height compliance. This creates a direct and serious risk of head injury to children falling from equipment.
- Roots and stems can undermine equipment foundations and ground anchors, reducing the structural stability of equipment and creating a risk of collapse or toppling.
- Dense weed growth can conceal dangerous objects including broken glass, syringes, animal fouling, and other hazards that would otherwise be identified during routine inspection.
- Slippery moss and algae growth on hard surfaces creates a significant slip hazard, particularly in wet conditions.
- Overgrown vegetation can obstruct sight lines, reducing natural surveillance of the play area and creating opportunities for anti-social behaviour.
- Certain weed species, including Giant Hogweed, Ragwort, and various nightshade species, are toxic or cause skin reactions and represent a direct risk to children playing in the area.

6.2 Weed Control Programme

ESP strongly recommends the following weed control programme as a minimum standard:

Weekly: Manual removal of visible weed growth from within the play area perimeter, with particular attention to surfacing areas, equipment bases, and perimeter edgings.

Monthly: Treatment of weed growth using appropriate herbicide or weed suppressant products. Only products approved for use in public spaces and around children should be used. Treatment must not be carried out whilst the play area is in use, and appropriate drying and airing time must be observed prior to reopening.

Seasonally (Spring & Autumn): Deep-clearance treatment of perimeter vegetation, grass, and any encroachment from surrounding planting or trees. Removal of moss and algae from hard surfaces using appropriate biocidal wash.
Annually: Full assessment of weed barrier membranes, edging boards, and surfacing perimeters. Replacement of damaged or failed weed control infrastructure. Assessment for invasive species including Japanese Knotweed.

Chemical Weed Killers Child Safety

Any herbicide or chemical weed control product used within or adjacent to the play area must be approved for use in public and child-accessed areas.

The managing authority must comply with all applicable COSHH regulations and product data sheets. Play areas must not be reopened following chemical treatment until the manufacturer's specified re-entry interval has expired. Records of all chemical treatments including product used, concentration, application date, and re-entry date must be retained.



7. Cleaning & Hygiene Standards

Regular cleaning of playground equipment is essential not only for the health and wellbeing of users but also for the preservation of the equipment itself.

Children, particularly younger users aged 1 to 5 years, will touch, mouth, and play in close contact with equipment surfaces.

Poor hygiene standards create a real risk of cross-contamination and the spread of infection, particularly during periods of increased community illness.

7.1 Routine Cleaning

- All equipment surfaces accessible to children must be cleaned at a minimum of weekly, using appropriate, child-safe cleaning products
- Particular attention must be paid to high-contact surfaces including handrails, handles, slides, and swing seats
- Baby and toddler equipment (cradle swings, toddler panels, and low-level play items) must be cleaned more frequently, ideally daily during peak seasons
- Refuse bins within the play area must be emptied at least weekly and more frequently during peak use periods
- Any animal fouling must be removed immediately upon discovery and the affected area disinfected

7.2 Seasonal and Deep Cleaning

- A thorough deep clean of all equipment, surfacing, and the play area enclosure should be carried out at least twice per year, recommended in early spring prior to the main season, and in autumn following the period of peak use
- Deep cleaning should include removal of all organic matter, degreasing of metalwork, treatment of algae and moss on hard surfaces, and cleaning of drainage channels
- Cleaning products must be rinsed thoroughly and the area must not be reopened until all surfaces are dry and free from residue

7.3 Surfacing Hygiene

- Loose-fill surfacing must be raked regularly to expose any contamination and to maintain uniform depth and coverage
- Any surfacing found to be contaminated with hazardous material including syringes, broken glass, or significant animal fouling must be cordoned off immediately pending full remediation
- Unitary rubber surfacing must be periodically washed to remove embedded dirt and organic matter that can accelerate surface degradation

8. Record Keeping & Documentation

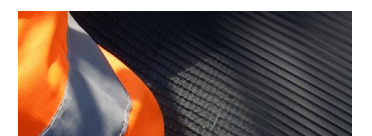
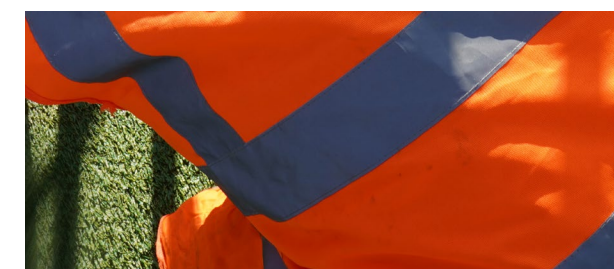
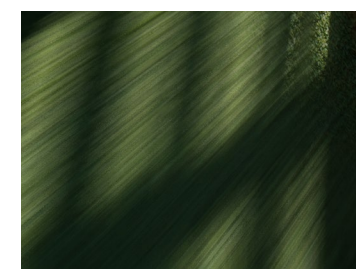
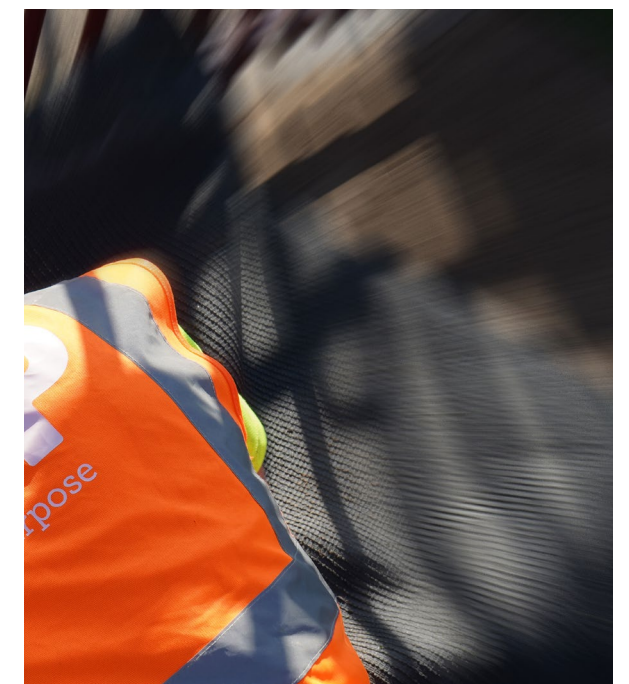
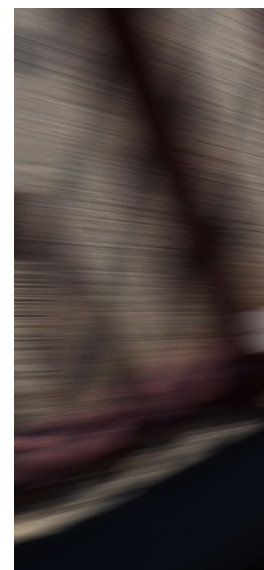
Comprehensive and contemporaneous record keeping is one of the most important obligations of the managing authority. In the event of an incident, injury, or legal claim, the managing authority's inspection and maintenance records will be the primary evidence of whether the site was being managed to an appropriate standard. Gaps in records, or the absence of records, will be treated as evidence of failure to maintain the site.

The following records must be maintained and retained for a minimum of ten years, or such longer period as may be required by any applicable statute of limitations:

1. A site-specific play area log book recording all routine visual inspections, including date, name of inspector, findings, and actions taken.
2. Records of all operational inspections, including date, name of inspector, full findings, risk assessments, and all remedial actions with completion dates.
3. The original RPII annual inspection report and all subsequent annual inspection reports, including all recommendations and confirmation of remediation.
4. Records of all maintenance activities including dates, work carried out, parts replaced, and operative details.
5. Records of all weed control and chemical treatments.
6. Records of all cleaning activities.
7. Records of any incidents, near-misses, or complaints received regarding the play area.
8. Any correspondence with ESP Play, insurance providers, or other parties relating to the play area.

Digital Record Keeping

ESP recommends that all inspection and maintenance records are retained in both paper and digital formats where practicable. Cloud-based record systems provide resilience against loss of paper records and allow rapid retrieval of documentation in the event of a claim or audit. All records must be legible, dated, and signed by the responsible individual.





9. Defect Management & Closure Procedures

When a defect or hazard is identified, the speed and appropriateness of the response is critical both to user safety and to the managing authority's legal position. The following risk-based approach must be applied:

Risk Category	Description	Required Response
Immediate / High	Immediate danger to users. Risk of serious injury or death.	Close equipment or entire play area immediately. Erect clear signage. Remediate before reopening. Notify senior officer same day.
Significant / Medium	Hazard present but not immediately life-threatening. Deterioration likely.	Take equipment out of use. Remediate within 24–72 hours. Do not reopen until safe.
Low / Monitor	Minor defect. Low likelihood of injury. Monitor for deterioration.	Record and schedule for routine maintenance. Reassess at next inspection.

Under no circumstances should equipment that has been identified as presenting an immediate or significant risk be left in use. Where a managing authority fails to close defective equipment and a user is subsequently injured, the managing authority will bear full legal and financial responsibility for that injury.



10. ESP's Liability Position & Disclaimer

ESP takes very seriously its obligations as a manufacturer and installer of playground equipment and is committed to the highest standards of product quality, safety in design, and professional installation. However, the safety of a play area over its working life is dependent upon the ongoing actions of the managing authority, and ESPs liability is strictly limited in the following respects:

10.1 Warranty Scope

ESP provides a manufacturer's warranty on all equipment and surfacing as specified in the relevant handover documentation. This warranty applies only where:

- The equipment has been used for its intended purpose by the intended age group
- The managing authority has complied with all inspection, maintenance, and record-keeping obligations set out in this document
- No unauthorised modifications, alterations, or additions have been made to the equipment
- Only ESP approved replacement parts have been used
- Annual RPII inspections have been carried out and all recommendations implemented within the stated timeframe

10.2 Exclusion of Liability

ESP will not accept liability for any injury, loss, or damage arising from:

- Failure by the managing authority to carry out routine, operational, or annual inspections
- Failure to act upon defects or hazards identified during inspection
- Failure to maintain impact attenuating surfacing to EN 1177 requirements
- Failure to conduct weed control and vegetation management as required by this document
- Failure to clean equipment to appropriate hygiene standards
- Use of non-approved replacement components
- Unauthorised modifications to equipment
- Acts of vandalism or wilful damage where the managing authority had failed to carry out reasonable security measures
- Failure to close or cordon off defective equipment pending repair

10.3 Post-Handover Responsibility

From the date of practical completion and handover of the installation, the managing authority assumes sole and full responsibility for the ongoing safety of the play area. ESP's involvement in the site following handover is limited to warranty matters and any additional contracted maintenance services. The managing authority must not represent to any third party, including members of the public, insurers, or legal representatives, that ESP bears any ongoing duty of care in respect of the site following handover, unless a separate maintenance contract is in place with ESP.

Legal Notice

This document is issued by ESP for guidance purposes and forms part of the handover documentation for each play area installation. It should be read in conjunction with the specific handover and warranty documentation issued for the site. Nothing in this document constitutes legal advice. The managing authority should seek its own independent legal and insurance advice in relation to its obligations as site occupier and manager. ESP reserves the right to rely upon this document and the obligations contained herein in any legal or insurance



11. Contacts & Useful Resources

11.2 ESP

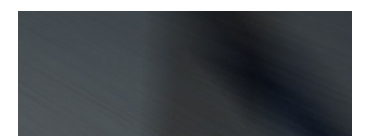
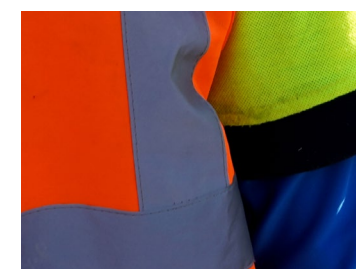
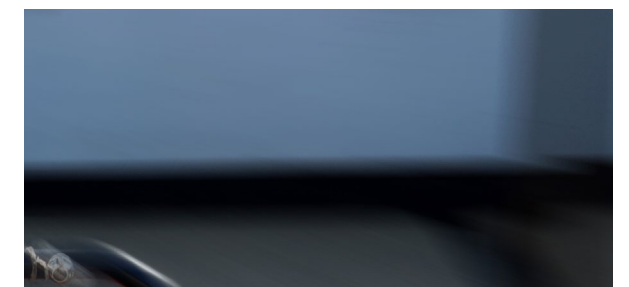
For all warranty enquiries, requests for approved replacement parts, technical advice, or to discuss ongoing maintenance services, please contact ESP directly. Contact details are provided in the site-specific handover documentation.

11.2 RPII — Register of Play Inspectors International

The RPII maintains a publicly searchable register of qualified playground inspectors. The managing authority can find and appoint a qualified RPII Annual Inspector at: www.rpii.co.uk

11.3 Relevant Standards

- BS EN 1176:2017 — Playground Equipment and Surfacing (Parts 1–11)
- BS EN 1177:2018 — Impact Attenuating Playground Surfacing
- HSE Playground Safety Guidance — www.hse.gov.uk
- RoSPA Play Safety Guidance — www.rospace.com



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