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OPFA is very pleased to announce that since our previous newsletter South Northants District Council have kindly given us a further grant to carry out our work in the district. The good news for South Northants organisations is that this means that our service is free of charge. We are very grateful to the District Council for enabling this to happen, and hope that many town and parish councils, community groups and voluntary organisations will be in contact.

OPFA exists to ensure that everyone has access to good quality facilities for outdoor sport and play. We recognise that these facilities can become increasingly stretched with more housing development and can help you to make the most of what you have and look to improve and increase your facilities.

Our Community Development Officer, Nicole O'Donnell, will carry out site visits to give advice and moral support, or alternatively can be contacted by phone or email. She can advise you on any aspect of the management of your outdoor recreation space. The most popular queries are for funding advice, or for a step by step guide to refurbishing your play area, but no question is too silly, or too small.

Please get in touch—those parishes that already have done have found the service to be very useful.



## How can we help you?

The OPFA advice service is wide ranging and varied. No question is too silly or too small! Just some of the practical ways that we can help you include:

- Site visits to give on the spot advice about playing fields or playgrounds, including facilities for toddlers and teenagers
- A regularly updated series of information sheets covering a wide range of topics (see page 6 for full list)
- Support and advice on new projects such as a new children's play area, pavilion or sports ground
- Advice on skate park and wheeled sports facilities
- Advice on teen facilities
- Guidance on standards and legislation affecting play and sporting facilities
- Local examples of other successful projects, with local people to contact
- Advice and information on a wide range of suppliers and manufacturers
- Regular networking and training events
- Identifying funding opportunities
- Advice on consultations
- Project management advice
- What to do if your local playing field is threatened with redevelopment
- Advice on managing a charitable playing field
- Maintenance and inspection information

Contact us for help and support on 01295 817662 or [oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com)

## Dealing with Vandalism

Unfortunately having to deal with vandalism is a problem faced by many play area managers. It is not an easy problem to solve, but these top tips may help, in particular if you are in the process of designing a new or refurbished play area.

- Sight lines and openness are really important. The site is much less likely to be vandalised if it can clearly be seen by passers by, or by police doing a drive-by. It is much better for both the safety of users and to prevent vandalism, if the play area is overlooked and can clearly be seen.
- Children don't play where they can't be seen, as it makes them feel insecure. Children like to be seen and be seen.
- Where possible get police input into any new play development, from either the Crime Prevention by Design Advisor or your local Police Community Support Officer.
- Involve children in the development and design of the new play area. By providing what they want, as far as is feasible, will ensure that the play area is well used, and will create ownership among the young people. They will therefore be more likely to look after it.
- Keep your site well maintained. Places that look good are less likely to be vandalised.

# Ask OPFA....

## **What are the standards for outdoor gym equipment?**

Outdoor fitness equipment is not currently subject to the same standards as play equipment, as it is not designed, intentioned or proportioned for children. It is intended for people aged 14+ with an overall height of 1.4m or over and should not be sited in, or next to the play area. A European standard for outdoor fitness equipment has been published: EN 16630 – for general safety requirements for the manufacture, installation, inspection and maintenance of permanently installed, freely accessible outdoor fitness equipment. The RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) inspect to this standard.

## **What standards should play equipment adhere to?**

All new play equipment should adhere to the European standards EN1176 and EN1177. It should be noted that adherence to these standards is best practice but not law. However registered RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) play inspectors will inspect to these standards.

<https://www.rosipa.com/play-safety/advice/en1176-equipment-standard/>

## **The children have built a den on our playing field. Can it stay there?**

Ultimately the landowner is responsible for any 'structure' or equipment on their land. Den building is to be encouraged, particularly in today's society where children are inclined less and less to play outside. If you find a den on your playing field and it is not in the way of any pitches, then there is no reason to remove it. It is however recommended that you conduct a risk assessment, record that you have done this, and keep an eye on the den whilst it remains there.



## **What maintenance regime should I follow for my playing field?**

The Institute of Groundsmanship Turfcare Advisory Service has a very useful month by month maintenance calendar available on their website.

<http://www.iogturfcare.com/>

## **Where can I find an independent qualified playground inspector?**

The RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) is the best place to find an inspector who covers your area.

<https://www.playinspectors.com/>

**OPFA can help you answer any queries you may have about the management of your outdoor recreation spaces. Contact Nicole O'Donnell on [oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com) or 01295 817662 for help and advice.**

## Funding update

**An important part of the OPFA role is to offer advice on sources of funding and funding applications. Whilst we don't have funding to give out ourselves, we appreciate how daunting it can be to try and find funding for your projects.**

**Postcode Community Trust** focuses on initiatives that benefit communities through grass-roots sports, arts, recreation and well-being programmes which improve a community's physical and mental health.

Funding is available for amounts between £500 - £20,000 for community groups and charities. Applicants that are not formally registered as a charity can apply for up to £2000. Projects that promote team/group sports and activities at a grass-roots level; or provide or enhance places for sports and recreation will be eligible. General renovation work on existing facilities will not be eligible.

<http://www.postcodecommunitytrust.org.uk/>

**Tesco Local Community Scheme** uses the money from the plastic bag charge to fund community projects, including projects to improve green spaces and recreation facilities.

Tesco customers vote in store for the shortlisted project that they would most like to see receive funding. Projects that get the most votes will get £4000, with £2000 for the second placed project and £1000 for the third placed project. If you have secured additional funding, there is no limit to what this can be. Bags for Help funding can form part of your wider project cost. Your project can be a stand-alone project or discrete, self-contained part of a larger scheme or part of a phased project. You will need to complete your project within twelve months of receipt of the grant,

Projects will be eligible if they are applying for capital funding for facilities that provide community benefit. The facility must have free and open access to all members of the community for a minimum of six days a week, during daylight hours.

<http://www.groundwork.org.uk/sites/tescocommunityscheme>

**One Family Foundation Community Awards** One Family customers can nominate a community project for a chance for the project to win up to £5,000, £10,000 or £25,000.

The Community Awards scheme is currently closed and due to reopen in Spring 2019. Details of when it will be opened again and eligibility criteria will be published on their website.

[www.onefamily.com/your-foundation/community-awards/](http://www.onefamily.com/your-foundation/community-awards/)

**Waitrose Community Matters** Shoppers are given a token to place in a box of the good cause they would most like to support. The more tokens a cause gets, the bigger the donation they receive. Each month every Waitrose branch donates £1,000 between 3 local good causes.

[www.waitrose.com/content/waitrose/en/home/inspiration/community\\_matters.html](http://www.waitrose.com/content/waitrose/en/home/inspiration/community_matters.html)

**Magic Little Grants** gives local charities and community groups the chance to apply for a £500 grant to deliver projects that encourage people to be physically active. To be eligible, applicants must either be in their first year of operation or have an annual income under £250,000. Preference will be given to projects that encourage social cohesion and help vulnerable people to overcome barriers to participation in physical activities.

Funding can be used to launch new projects, support existing ones, or cover core costs associated with ongoing work.

The deadline for applications for Magic Little Grants 2019 is midnight on 30th November 2019.

<https://localgiving.org/what-we-do/magic-little-grants/>



## Weed control in public recreation areas

Weed control is part of the general maintenance of outdoor public recreation areas. The Amenity Forum is an independent body to bring together professional organisations with an involvement in the amenity horticulture sector. They have useful documents on their website, in the guidance section, including notes on spraying in public areas, a briefing note on controlling weeds on hard surfaces, and a specification for weed control contracts.

[www.amenityforum.co.uk/](http://www.amenityforum.co.uk/)

## Dealing with faulty play area equipment

If you have a piece of faulty play equipment awaiting repair on your play area, it is important to immobilise the piece of equipment and isolate it from the children. The best way of doing this is with plastic orange fencing, or with Heras fencing. Don't use hazard tape. It is not enough of a deterrent for children and they can easily get entangled in it; it will then constrict and can become a noose. If using plastic fencing, do not fasten this with metal pins. If using Heras fencing, ensure that each panel is attached with a minimum of 2 clasps. Immobilised equipment should display a sign that says 'Under Repair'. This is better than one that says 'Danger—Keep Off' as the latter is more likely to be seen as a challenge to try it out by the risk takers among the local children!

## Sport England Club Matters workshops

Short training sessions in a range of topics that are relevant to Sports Clubs are delivered across the country as part of Sport England's Club Matters scheme. Sessions are available on the following topics:

- Club Structures
- Marketing Strategy
- Business planning
- Participant experience
- Volunteer experience
- Club Finance and Tax requirements
- Facebook

<https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/club-matters-workshops/>

## Guidelines for accessible play areas

Access paths should be hard surfaced and a minimum of 1.2m wide, ideally at least 1.8m to allow for double buggies and wheelchair users. If the path is particularly long, it may be useful to have a seat or bench at an appropriate point. Gates or entrances should be a minimum of 1m wide, and ideally 1.8m wide. Steps should be avoided. Where a change of surface height is necessary a non-slip ramp with a maximum gradient of 1:12 should be used. Sudden changes of level should be clearly visible, with some form of bright marking and hand rails if possible.



Helping communities make good space for sport and play

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Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association is a registered charity (no. 304398). We work across Oxfordshire and South Northants.

Our aim is to ensure that people of all ages, including people with disabilities, have access to good quality local outdoor sport and recreational facilities, including children's play.

The OPFA is the only non-commercial organisation in the county able to provide a comprehensive and impartial playing space advice service for local Oxfordshire and South Northants groups. If you are working on an outdoor recreation project in your community, we would love to hear from you.

**Phone: 01295 817662   Web: [www.opfa.org.uk](http://www.opfa.org.uk)   E-mail: [oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordshirepfa@gmail.com)**

## Information sheets available

OPFA has many information sheets on different topics covering all aspects of outdoor recreation provision. We have recently produced a new one on Pitch Maintenance. The full list of information sheets is opposite.

Please contact OPFA if you would find any of them useful. We continue to produce information as the need arises, and also have access to a lot of information from our partner organisations.

- Terms of reference for a Parish Council Committee responsible for the management of land.
- Maintenance contractors
- Pitch Maintenance
- Accessible Play Areas
- Accidents
- Balls Walls
- BMX Info
- Playground Fencing and Gates
- Funding Opportunities
- Playground Inspections
- Managing Charitable Playing Fields
- Maintenance Contractors
- Playground Notices
- Planning and Providing for a Wheeled Sport Facility
- Problems with Dogs
- Project Plan – Play Area Development
- Project Plan – Skate Park Development
- Risk Management and Risk Assessments
- Playground Legislation, Standards and Guidelines