



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Justin Tomlinson MP

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work

Department for Work and Pensions

4th Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9DA



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Luke Hall MP

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local
Government**

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

26 July 2021

Dear Colleague,

Accessible and Inclusive Play Areas

We are writing to you to highlight the important issue of inclusive and accessible playgrounds. As you know, it is vitally important for all local authorities to consider their duties under the Equalities Act of 2010 and ensure that new and refurbished play areas are accessible and inclusive. This should apply to all play areas, from local areas of play with a few pieces of fixed play equipment, to larger neighbourhood equipped areas of play. This is a priority for this government and a key area of focus in the forthcoming National Disability Strategy.

Creating play areas that can be used by all children, including those with disabilities, does not need to cost significantly more. It is about considering appropriate surface materials and layout, providing sensory play opportunities and including equipment which is accessible, such as wider slides or high back swings.

Bodies such as the Activity Alliance, a national charity which helps organisations to include disabled people in sport and activity, can help advise on the best approach to take to ensure accessibility and inclusion. Barry Horne, Chief Executive of the Activity Alliance has told us that play areas need to be inclusive by design, and that it's not about the creation of specialist, separate provision. He also highlighted the importance of councils advocating for accessibility and noted that there was some existing national and international guidance which could help councils. For example, there is the British Standard BS 8300-1:2018 on the design of an accessible and inclusive built environment and section 12.6 which covers play areas and the importance of clear routes, sensory play opportunities, dynamic pieces within easy reach for a range of users, accessible water and sand opportunities, ability to interact with climbing units which themselves might not be accessible, quiet areas and accessible observation points.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will now start work with stakeholders to develop additional guidance on accessible playground equipment. We know many councils have already taken steps to ensure inclusive play environments for children of all abilities. There is much good practice to draw on, and we would be grateful if you could share any examples of best practice so that we can make this available to all. In this way we can add to the support offered by the Activity Alliance and by providers of accessible play

equipment, and the practices in the British Standards, by building on the real-world experience of councils that have already demonstrated what can be achieved. We are also taking steps to address the issue through the National Model Design Code, and guidance supporting the Code to stress the importance of providing accessible and inclusive play spaces and equipment for all.

We recently met with Becky Maddern, a mother from Swindon. Her son Benjamin has cerebral palsy and is blind and unable to sit, stand or walk. So, Becky set up Benjamin's Smile charity to raise the vital funds needed for his therapy and equipment. However, alongside her work for his charity she has also launched an accessible parks campaign and is encouraging her local parish council and others across Swindon to make new and refurbished play areas more accessible and inclusive, and would like councils across the country to do the same. The reception has been very positive and parish councils have agreed to share guidance with developers of play spaces in their area. We were inspired by Becky and Benjamin's story. So, we would like to take this opportunity to urge you to recognise the importance of ensuring that all new and refurbished play areas are accessible and inclusive, using existing guidance.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and we look forward to working with you to create play areas that can be enjoyed by all children of all abilities.

Yours ever,



LUKE HALL MP



JUSTIN TOMLINSON MP