

# Under 12s Play Area, Broomhall Park Recreation Ground Risk Report

(This is the area within the black bow top fencing)

This report has been written based upon the specific playgrounds and outdoor gym government advice provided on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Any material changes to this advice after this date may change the findings of the report.

## Background

The government took the decision due to the pandemic classification of the virus, Covid-19, to considerably limit the scope of activities that residents of England could undertake on March 21, 2020 (Lockdown). At this time all the playgrounds operated by the parish council were closed and have remained so.

On June 23, the government announced during its phased return to the “new normal” that playgrounds and outdoor gyms could potentially open on July 4, 2020. The government advice (link below) was subsequently made available on June 26 2020 leaving owners of playground and outdoor gyms 5 working days in which to comply by updating general risk assessments, completing any relevant maintenance and carrying out a Covid-19 specific risk assessment against the new guidelines.

## Government Guidance

The full guidance issued June 26 2020 is available on the link below, however it is worth highlighting that many of the “reasonable measures” detailed are more suitable for supervised locations and therefore creates issues for playgrounds such as Broomhall Recreation Ground where no daytime supervision is provided.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms>

The guidance defines playgrounds as “outdoor structures designed for children to play in or on. They may include equipment such as slides, monkey bars, climbing frames, activity towers, swings, spring rockers, see saws and sandpits”.

Whilst the guidance itself is non-statutory, it includes key principles for safely reopening upon which the following risk assessment has been carried out.

Key for risk assessment: **PR** = Probability; **IM** = Impact; **R** = Risk  
Probability and Impact assessed - 1 (low) to 5 (high) and Risk = PR x IM  
Risk scores: 1-5 **GREEN**; 6 – 10 **AMBER**; 11 – 25 **RED**  
**Mitigations** = those detailed in the government publication

Principles	Risks	Assessment			Mitigation	Re-Assessment			Analysis / Conclusion
		PR	IM	R		PR	IM	R	
<p><b>To assess and manage general maintenance risks which may have occurred during lockdown.</b> Ensure play equipment is safe to use and that risks from damaged or defective equipment are addressed before opening.</p>	Damage or vandalism has occurred during the period of closure.	3	3	9	1. On site personnel daily checks 2. Refurbishment taking place during close-down period 3. Safety check carried out by contractor	1	1	1	Management and controls in place are sufficient to mitigate the risk.
<p><b>To assess and manage the risk of potential COVID-19 transmission by reducing social interaction between people and promoting Social Distancing.</b> Put in place measures to support social distancing – 2m or 1m plus risk mitigations.</p>	Covid-19 is spread via social interaction by users of the playground.	4	4	16	<a href="#">Example mitigation measures as detailed by government</a>				
					Limit the number of users in the play area at any one time	3	4	12	Requires unlikely user adherence to limits or additional resource to manage and monitor at extra expense to SPC.
					Limit the number of users able to use a piece of equipment	3	4	12	Requires unlikely user adherence to limits or additional resource to manage and monitor at extra expense to SPC.
					Only 1 family member accompanying a child.	3	4	12	Requires unlikely user adherence to limits or additional resource to manage and monitor at extra expense to SPC.
					Limit the available number of seats on equipment or numbers of swings available to promote social distancing, including for parents, carers or guardians who might push children.	3	3	9	Requires physical markings and signage to implement, then unlikely user adherence to mitigate any risk. Alternatively requires managing and monitoring at extra expense to SPC
					Setting a time limit and using signs to communicate this to users, parents, guardians, or carers.	3	4	12	To implement this, it would need resource at extra expense to SPC.

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					Implement a queue or waiting area.	2	2	4	To implement this, it would need resource at extra expense to SPC.
					Operate a booking system	2	2	4	To implement this, it would need resource at extra expense to SPC.
<b>To assess and manage the risk of potential COVID-19 transmission by Cleaning and Hygiene.</b>	Covid-19 is spread via surface contamination by users of the playground.	4	4	16	Clean high traffic touch points frequently. These include: Slides, monkey bars and climbing frames. Semi enclosed playhouses or huts for small children. Enclosed crawl through 'tunnels' or tube slides	2	2	4	Cleaning at the end of each day with disinfectant sprayers is possible with existing resource.  Risk remains for the definition of "frequently".
					Exercise bars and machine handles on outdoor gym equipment				
					Entry and exit points such as gates				
					Seating areas, benches, and picnic tables				
					Refuse areas/bins				
					Signage to encourage hand hygiene including washing/sanitising hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds, particularly at the beginning and end of play.				
					Signage to advise users (or parents of users) not to touch their faces, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue or arm when a tissue is not available.				
					Signage to remind adults and children not to put their mouths on equipment or their hands in their mouths				
Signage promoting and reminding users, parents, guardians, and carers of the need for social distancing									

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<b>To assess and manage the risk of potential COVID-19 transmission by promoting the wearing of face coverings</b>	Spread of Covid-19 via droplet transmission from speaking, coughing, breathing (exhalation).	3	4	12	If possible, a face covering should be worn in enclosed public spaces where social distancing is not possible and where the public may come into contact with people they do not normally meet.	2	5	10	Requires adherence to mitigate the risk and achieve the re-assessment.  Failure to observe would increase other risks and negate other mitigations which were taken in conjunction.
					Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of 3 or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly.	2	4	8	
					Parents should be aware that wearing a face covering in a playground setting could pose an additional safety risk and should use their judgement on whether their children wear a face covering.	3	4	12	
					It is important to use face coverings properly and that signs promote their use appropriately and make it clear users should wash their hands before putting them on and taking them off	2	4	8	
<b>Additional Measures and Communicating with Parents</b>	Spread of Covid-19 due to lack of parental engagement	3	4	12	<b>Promote responsible behaviour by children, parents, carers, and guardians by considering signage to make clear to users, parents, guardians, and carers that:</b>				
					The consumption of food or drink on play equipment or in the play area is banned.	1	5	5	Requires parent engagement and compliance to undertake the information and instructions given to be effective.
					All litter, including any used protective wear such as face coverings or gloves, should be disposed of properly in litter bins, or taking it home where a bin is not provided	3	3	9	
<b>Considering Children with Additional Needs</b>	Spread of Covid-19 due to additional needs requirements.	3	3	9	Children with special needs (not catered for already) to be accompanied by a responsible adult to provide appropriate assistance complying with guidelines.	1	4	4	Requires adherence to be effective.

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<b>Risk / Mitigation Review and Final Recommendation</b>									
<b>Consider the control measures proposed to mitigate the risks.</b>	Failure to comply with the mitigations used to allow the playground to open, such as: limits, signage, adherence to new regulations and rules, cleaning, and personal protection equipment.			16	Continued closure of the facility due to inability to effectively mitigate the risk.			1	Continued closure provides the highest mitigation of risk factor.  Existing fencing and monitoring continuing.
<b>Enforcing the limits of users in the fenced u 12s playground.</b>	Without additional resource the usual summer numbers of >200 will overwhelm any covid-19 measures spreading the virus.			20	Continued closure of the facility due to inability to effectively mitigate the risk.  Fencing provides a confined area where number limiting becomes important to limit the spread from social distancing.			1	Continued closure provides the highest mitigation of risk factor.

## Recommendation

The importance of playgrounds for physical, emotional, and cognitive development cannot be dismissed when making the final decision on whether to remain closed or to open the Under 12s Playground. However, the importance of adhering to the government stated requirements and guidelines and the safety of users cannot be underestimated, leaving a difficult balance in these unprecedented times.

It is the government stated measure to limit the numbers, providing signage to clearly show the limits and expecting visitors to abide by them that creates the largest risk.

The council insurers (Hiscox) state that all “reasonable” actions should be taken and that the government advice and requirements should be adhered to as a minimum.

With an assessed user number of 15 discrete family groups being able to use the under 12s playground at the same time, reviewed in conjunction with the knowledge that on a sunny day over 300 people can visit this playground, it is highly unlikely that signage without monitoring and management would reduce the user numbers to the required levels.

Therefore, until the government guidelines are amended to remove the requirement for limiting numbers, the risk assessment recommendation is to keep the under 12s playground closed.