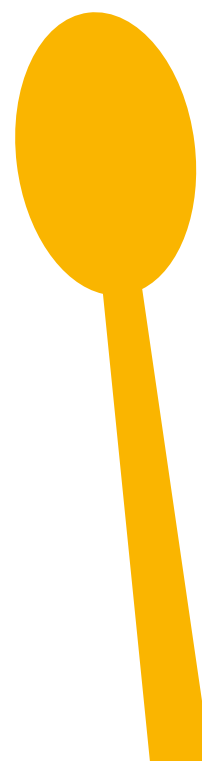




## Practical guidance to get started

In this section you will find:

- getting started
- assessing current provision
- sample letter or leaflet to parents
- tried and tested loose parts
- acquiring plentiful loose parts
- storage
- checking loose parts before, during and after playing
- moving loose parts – lifting and handling guidance
- maintenance.





# Getting started

- Consider the use of loose parts within your overall approach to play.
- Assess current provision. **You can involve children and teenagers at each step in fun and interesting ways.**
- Develop an action plan.
- Work out your approach to evaluation right from the start – it's helpful to have evidence showing the difference 'before' and 'after' the introduction of loose parts.
- Involve and educate staff, parents and carers about the use and benefits of loose parts. **Online film clips, small study visits and presentations are all very useful.**
- Access training to equip adults with knowledge, skills and confidence.
- Get your procedures in place for sourcing, managing and using loose parts. **You will review these as time goes on.**
- Work out where and how you will store your loose parts.
- Work on your risk-benefit assessment of loose parts play. **See page 54. These are likely to be adjusted as you and the children gain experience.**
- Gather your initial supply of loose parts and figure out how they will be replenished.
- Try some taster sessions, ideally with support from an experienced playworker or play organisation.
- Facilitate play opportunities in line with the Playwork Principles.
- Plan, do, review.

It's natural for challenges to arise along the way when you are introducing something new. These may be practical issues, or practice or team challenges.

In the long term, working through issues as a team helps to embed loose parts play even more firmly in the setting's way of working. Problem-solving together with the children can improve understanding of the loose parts play approach.



# Assessing current provision

**Before introducing loose parts for play, and at intervals after introducing them, it's helpful to assess your current provision. This ensures that everyone can see the impact of the changes that will follow.**

**It's important that information is gathered from all users of the play space as perspectives of what's on offer may vary widely between children or between children and adults. Children are well placed to gather as well as provide information, creating opportunities to develop their research skills.**

## What information would be useful to collect and understand?

- play features and affordances of the physical environment
- obstacles to play and underused space
- routines and rules and how they influence play
- roles and expectations of children and adults in relation to play
- resources available for play
- what children like to do outside.

## How can we involve children and teenagers successfully?

- Discuss why information is being collected and how it will be used.
- Involve everyone in deciding what information should be collected and how.
- Establish a sense of trust and respect for each other's opinions.
- Use a variety of methods for collecting information that will appeal to children's varied strengths and interests, for example visual, creative, factual, data-driven, analytical methods.
- Carry out activities in the spaces you are gathering information about. For example, interview the playground supervisor in the area he or she usually covers; mark up site plans outdoors in the play space.

## How can information be captured?

- Take photos or videos of features of the playspace and use them to prompt discussion or make comparisons between what happens in different places.
- Draw a simple plan or map of the play space. Make plenty of photocopies then ask everyone to mark them up from their point of view. They could be asked to draw, write, scribble or use stickers to identify things like:
  - my favourite place to play
  - 'trouble' spots
  - who does what where
  - underused spaces, etc.
- Take time-lapse photos (or simple snapshots at regular intervals) of the same area over the course of a play session to see what really happens there.
- Make an inventory of existing play resources. You can do this with visual methods such as photos, symbols and wall charts.
- Create a simple chart for monitoring things like first aid in the playground, playground incidents, or other data that can be routinely collected. This should help you assess the impact of introducing loose parts. This can be an interesting data handling challenge for children.



- Organise for children to interview each other and adults. Preparing questions, asking them, listening and recording answers are great exercises in communication. Interviews can be recorded on paper, with audio or video.
- Check your playground rules, policies and procedures. Think about what they tell you about how play is perceived and valued.
- Review the expectations and job descriptions of people who are involved in supporting play in your setting. Do they reflect what is required to support play?
- Be brave! Find out what the children really think about how adults are supporting or hindering play through their actions.
- Re-visit each activity once loose parts play has got going so that you can gauge the impact.
- The same activities or focus could be given to children of different ages and stages to reveal different points of view and what they have in common.
- Some activities may be more appropriate for adults or staff, such as reviewing policies, but even these could usefully involve children.
- Some play organisations offer help to run or support assessment activities.
- Some organisations (play and others) can offer help in including the views of very young children or children and teenagers with additional support needs.

### How can we organise these activities?

- One class or group could take the lead role in making a plan of activities and then allocate them to different children, classes, adults or groups to carry out.
- A number of classes or groups could each take one aspect of the assessment and report back.
- Gather the information together and look for themes, priorities, opportunities.
- Use it to answer questions such as: How could we make better use of the space we have? Are there areas valued by children that we hadn't noticed before? Are there groups of children for whom we should be doing more to make sure they have fair opportunities to play outdoors? Do adults need to do things differently?



**Hidden behind some fabric, Nina spends a long time sorting shells. Staff hear her identifying colours and sizes, “whether smooth or rough”. When I take the fabric down, I find elaborate patterns made with string and elastic.”**

(Susan Humble, ELPA at Whitecraig Playgroup)





## ASSESSING CURRENT PROVISION – A TOOL TO HELP PLAN ACTIVITIES

WHAT DO WE WANT TO FIND OUT ABOUT?	WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES COULD WE CHOOSE FROM?	WHO DO WE THINK COULD DO THIS?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Play features</li><li>• Affordances (what the space offers children the chance to do, e.g., lie rolling down hills, balancing on a log, chatting in a bush)</li><li>• Things that get in the way of playing</li><li>• Space that isn't used or could be used better</li><li>• What do children like to do outside</li></ul>	<p>Choose some activities from the suggestions above or add your own, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Photos or videos</i></li><li>• <i>Site maps</i></li><li>• <i>Time-lapse pictures</i></li></ul>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Mr M's class – draw site plans and photocopy them</i></li><li>• <i>All classes do a map marking activity with them</i></li><li>• <i>After school club – take photos and put them on the noticeboard</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Routines and rules and their impact on play</li></ul>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Interviews</i></li><li>• <i>Check playground rules, policies and procedures</i></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roles and expectations of children and adults in relation to play</li></ul>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Expectations and job descriptions</i></li><li>• <i>Children's views</i></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resources available for play (stuff to play with)</li></ul>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Make an inventory</i></li><li>• <i>Find out what is used most and who likes to use what</i></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying themes, priorities and opportunities from the information we have found out</li></ul>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Review all the information that has been gathered</i></li><li>• <i>Ask questions to help make some conclusions</i></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What else do you want to find out?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What other activities would you choose?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who else can help?</li></ul>

## Further reading and templates

- Play Wales: Play space audit template  
<http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/schoolstoolkit>
- Shackell, A., Butler, N., Doyle, P. and Ball, D. (2008) *Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces*. London: Play England.  
<http://www.playengland.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/design-for-play.pdf>
- *The Good School Playground Guide* (2013) Learning through Landscapes and *The playtime revolution. Developing school play times to support the curriculum and nurture happy, healthy children* (2012) Learning through Landscapes  
[https://www.ltl.org.uk/free-resources/?swoof=1&pa\\_subject=play](https://www.ltl.org.uk/free-resources/?swoof=1&pa_subject=play)



# Sample letter or leaflet to parents

## Introducing loose parts play

This term we are introducing loose parts play. ‘Loose parts’ are things like cardboard boxes, tyres, crates, tarpaulins, wooden planks and plastic guttering. Loose parts let children play in many different ways – anything from making a pirate ship to an assault course or den.

Add a picture of some loose parts you'll be using here

Add a picture of some loose parts you'll be using here

Add a picture of some loose parts you'll be using here

## Loose parts play will happen in and out of class time.

### It will be a chance for children to:

- play freely with friends • investigate • discover • explore • create

## Our preparation for loose parts play. Staff and children have:

- prepared together to introduce the loose parts to the playground
- received training on practical and safety issues
- agreed some guidelines
- put plans in place to check all the loose parts for safety on a regular basis.

## Dress for the weather!

Please ensure your child is dressed for the weather so they can join in properly. In cold weather they might need warm boots, waterproof jackets and gloves. In warmer weather sunscreen, and hats etc. Let us know if you need any help with these items.

## Parents and carers

Would you like to come and see what's happening? Get in touch and we'll arrange a suitable time.

Do you have loose parts to donate? We will need a supply of loose parts to keep things interesting. Currently we are looking for:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

Please let us know if you'd like someone to collect any loose parts.



# Tried and tested loose parts



## Natural

- Wooden pennies (slices of wood about three inches thick)
- Logs of different heights and widths
- A variety of lengths of wood
- Willow or hazel rods at least 1.5m long
- Sticks – various lengths
- Stones, pebbles, cobbles.

### Manufactured wood

- Whisky barrel planters for mixing and collecting
- Pieces of decking.

### Surfaces and features

- Planted willow tunnels, dens and hedges
- Water supplied from an outside tap, a barrel pump, water butt or jerry cans with taps
- Sand (and resources for sand play and maintenance – including sieves, buckets, spades, trowels, long handled sturdy brooms, brushes, rakes etc.)
- Pebbles, pea gravel or other small stones
- Bark chips
- Mud
- Long grass
- Trees – plant now for future generations of children
- Fire pit (temporary or permanent).



## Man-made

- Quick drying materials such as organza, fleece blankets and shower curtains
- Tarpaulins (various sizes, types and colours)
- Milk and bread crates
- Wooden pallets – tough ones in good condition
- Tough buckets
- Cable drums or reels
- Tubes, guttering and funnels, hosepipe, bore pipes and other pipes
- Ramps and lengths of plastics and other materials such as corrugated transparent plastic
- Nets
- Tyres – bicycle, motorbike, go-kart and car tyres
- Large shallow tray
- Trolley to aid tidying up
- Wheelbarrow
- Old suitcases or wheeled shopping bags
- Baskets for collecting and transporting
- Steering wheels
- Computer keyboards
- Old clothes for dressing up, for example, jacket suits, waistcoats and handbags
- Portable seats and things to sit on: aluminium bubble-wrap, camping mats and gardening mats.



## More temporary

- Chalk
- Straw bales
- Cardboard boxes and tubes – various sizes and shapes
- Leaves, feathers, shells, pine cones
- Air drying modelling clay
- Tree brushings
- Leaves
- Cones and seed pods
- Seaweed
- Plastic bottles and containers.



## Useful little bits

(some may be kept by adults in pockets or bags)

- Velcro straps
- Fence clamps and hooks
- String, paracord and high visibility guy ropes
- Karabiners (from climbing or camping shops)
- Pegs of different sorts, including tent pegs
- Duct tape and masking tape.



## Useful for play in the dark

- Torches, head torches
- Hi-vis jackets
- Glow in the dark things
- Reflective markers such as traffic cones
- Lanterns – battery powered, wind-up or solar powered, camping lights, fairy lights
- Whistles and horns
- Candles, tealights, matches – all to be used with appropriate supervision
- Tactile, smelly and other sensory items.



## Loose parts for babies and toddlers

- Baskets
- Pots and pans
- Wooden spoons
- Natural items like pine cones, seashells, and pebbles
- Curtain rings, jar lids
- Cardboard tubes
- Empty cotton reels.

For more ideas for babies and toddlers  
<https://www.playfulchildhoods.wales/>

Always be aware that small items can be choking hazards for babies and young children.



## Loose parts that will fit into a rucksack or trolley

- Chalk
- String
- A ball
- Newspaper
- Matches, fire-steel and cotton wool, baking tray – mini fire-making pack
- Lightweight fabric
- Rope
- Swivel pulleys
- Hammock
- Trowel
- Accessories: old tights, gloves, etc
- Waterproof sheet or blanket
- Useful little bits as above.





# Acquiring plentiful loose parts

**The vast majority of loose parts for play can be sourced free of charge. The main costs are in time taken to source and collect, fuel costs if you have to pick them up, and the cost of printing posters and letters. Using social media is a great way to reduce those costs further.**

**Part of the beauty of the whole approach is that loose parts are mainly cheap or free and add random, surprise qualities to play depending on what turns up.**

**Some people have a natural talent for acquiring loose parts. Once you start, spotting loose parts wherever you go can become a life-long habit.**

## How can we acquire loose parts?

- Let people know the kinds of things you are looking for and see what comes in. This is the easiest and often the single most successful way to acquire loose parts.
- Try social media posts, emails, posters and letters. If you have too much of one thing and not enough of another, let people know. It's a great way for parents, carers and the community to be involved in your project.
- Visit local companies, building site offices, factories and shops to explain about loose parts play and how they could help. Take information or pictures so they understand the idea.
- Send a letter or email as an introduction or follow up – try to address it to a named individual if possible.
- Ask – if you see some possible loose parts such as gas pipes or building offcuts, go and ask in person.
- Join a scrapstore if there is one in your area.
- Join forces with other groups of settings and share and swap loose parts.
- Visit charity shops and jumble sales for unusual items.

## How many loose parts do we need?

The number of loose parts should be proportionate to the size of the play area and the number of children. As a rough guide, multiply the number of children by four or five to work out how many items of loose parts you might need. You will soon get a sense of popular items to replenish frequently and, on a day-to-day basis, the types of loose parts that are currently in demand from the children.



**Respect children's right to choose the resource they want to use by:**

- **making sure there are enough resources for the number of children playing with them**
- **asking children to use the resources until they are finished or done and then pass them on to whoever asked for them**
- **asking children to 'swap' or negotiate using a resource, by offering something of theirs in return**
- **asking the children if they think they can work out a solution to the problem themselves."**

(Louise Caldwell, Play Development Officer with Edinburgh City Council)



## Tips to keep your supplies of loose parts topped up

- Set up a cupboard or area where children can deposit materials from home so that they can be checked and prepared for play.
- Add reminders to newsletters, social media and websites.
- Find out which parents work or have hobbies likely to produce a good supply of loose parts – builders, plumbers, farmers, designers etc. Ask them to look out for things that could be donated.
- Make friends with your local builders, countryside rangers and tree surgeons.
- Make sure people know you are looking for loose parts and supplies are likely to come!

## A note about tyres

Old tyres have fantastic value on play spaces both as loose resources and for making semi-permanent structures. Commercial companies pay to dispose of old tyres so are happy to give them away. However, they can present particular hazards to be aware of:

- Tyres present a fire hazard and should be stored safely away from buildings in line with any local fire guidance that may exist.
- Most tyres have steel bracing; they should be checked for protruding wires and not used if they have any.
- Tyres fixed in place should have holes drilled for drainage (loose tyres can also hold stagnant water and animal life so need to be emptied daily).
- Tyres fixed together to create structures must not create wedge trap points.
- Nylon brace tyres are safer for swings, where their impact-absorbing qualities are important.

[See page 22 for a list of tried and tested loose parts.](#)



**At Historic Environment Scotland we have been donating items such as hard hats, rope, cardboard tubes and broken keyboards to the Loose Parts Play project in East Lothian. By donating items directly for play, we have saved a lot of emissions from the transport and recycling processes. It means we can reduce our environmental impact and the associated costs. It also means that we can see the positive impacts our waste can create. Take hard hats for example: the safety guarantee expires after five years so they have to be replaced and are difficult to recycle. The hats would otherwise have been stripped of their parts and transported for recycling. Seeing how children can use these items to explore their imagination and creativity, construct and invent, encourages our staff to seek re-use opportunities for other items they come across. This partnership was a catalyst for us to sign up to an online redistribution network called Warp It, which helps us to reach out to more charities and projects to donate other surplus items. The most unusual loose part we've been able to redirect to play is the bright red rope that we use to cordon off events at Edinburgh Castle!"**

(Katie Carter, Circular Economy Project Officer, Historic Environment Scotland)



# Storage

**How to store loose parts is an early consideration for organising your project. In some settings storage is in sheds and containers, in others open-sided shelters, and in others there is minimal storage for certain items while other loose parts are left outside. Storage could also simply be an area in a porch or reception area, a wheelie bin of resources, items kept in a trolley or cart, or even just a rucksack containing essentials.**

## Storage considerations

- Discuss which storage options are suitable for the location and scale of your project.
- Make sure the children or teenagers can access the storage as independently as possible.
- Make sure the doors are wide enough – double doors on the longest side of a large container work well.
- Consider how to lay out the inside of the storage for ease of access. Try open boxes or bays against the sides to allow materials to be sorted easily.
- Create child-friendly signage to show what is stored where.
- Consider installing ramps, hard surfaces such as tarmac or paving immediately outside the storage and a canopied front for additional shelter.
- Think about whether wood or metal storage is appropriate to your setting.
- Think aesthetics too, for example, a mural designed and painted by children, storage made multipurpose with the addition of a climbing wall, storage masked by planting.

## The location of the storage space

An early discussion with those responsible for the maintenance or management of your outdoor space will help to decide on the appropriate space.

Some things to consider:

- Can the storage be sited in or near the area where the loose parts will be used?
- Would several small storage areas work better than one large one?
- Would it make tidying up easier if the storage was sited on the route the children take to leave the play space or to go back into a building?
- Is access kept clear for emergency vehicles?
- Are there any manholes, drains, water hydrants or other services to avoid?
- Have you checked the location of underground pipes and services?
- Are any permissions required before building or installing storage?
- Will the storage inadvertently create easy access to a roof or a boundary wall?





## What can be left outside?

Natural play materials such as sand, stones, bark chips, twigs and vegetation are generally best left out as part of the play environment. In many locations, other general supplies of loose parts are unlikely to be tampered with or stolen, but the team on the site will be best placed to decide.

**“Most of the loose parts are left out overnight in the garden and local children come in to play. In the mornings we are delighted to see the wonderful structures they have made.”**

(Julie Steele, Burnbrae Primary School, provision for children with complex needs)

## Some options to consider

- Take a low-key tolerant approach to children playing with loose parts out of hours, providing no damage is done.
- Put up some signs letting children or teenagers know you are aware they are playing with loose parts out of hours and that you are happy with that as long as nothing is damaged.
- Think whether storage might become the most likely target of vandalism, especially if locked.
- Consider if some loose parts can simply be left out at little risk of harm or theft.
- Ask friendly neighbours or local dog walkers to keep an eye on the play space informally and alert you or the police if they see any problems.
- Consider if problems are seasonal, for example more chance of things being set alight around bonfire night or more teenagers hanging around on long summer evenings. If so, you might simply need temporary solutions.
- Use your local knowledge to make a judgement.

## Problem solving

It can be disheartening if your project suffers from vandalism and there is no answer that fits every situation. Sometimes you simply have to persevere until problems settle. Schools or groups that have a strong place in the community tend to experience fewer problems. Involving children, teenagers, neighbours and community members in activities can help. Youth services and local safety partnerships may also help in engaging with young people. Your local crime prevention officer may be able to offer some site specific advice.

## Tidying up tips

- Trolleys, barrows and carts can make gathering loose parts up more fun and less labour intensive for adults and children.
- Large loose parts can be quicker to tidy away than lots of small ones.
- Little loose parts like cones and shells can easily get scattered outside – they’ll need less gathering if they are incorporated in the outdoor environment, for example, a cone pit in a raised bed.
- On wet days, quick-dry materials such as tarpaulins and organza can be easier to manage than heavy cotton-based materials.
- Sorting as you go along can be a fun incentive, for example, you can ask one group to fill a trolley with pipes and another to fill a cart with wooden things.

**See page 30 for tips on lifting and moving items safely.**

**See page 40 for more on play routines.**





## Some environmental, social, ethical and financial benefits of loose parts

- Loose parts for play are usually free of charge or very cheaply obtained.
- Re-used scrap slows down the rate at which it ends up in landfill or is recycled.
- Adults and children can develop awareness and understanding of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in order to have an environmentally sensitive approach to gathering natural loose parts.
- Unexpected and unusual donations stimulate play in new and exciting ways.
- Loose parts tend to be free from gender, social and cognitive bias. Anyone of any age, ability, background and class can pick up a stick and use it in their play, in their own way.
- ‘Real life’ resources enable children to make connections to their family interests, local culture, natural heritage and the world of work.
- Loose parts can reflect the local community and culture, for example a harbour town might acquire an old boat, fishing nets, boxes, buoys, seaweed, shells and lobster creels.

## Minimising the environmental impact of play

Any space designated for play, be this a school ground, public park, beach or wood, is likely to be well-used by children in a range of ways that adults may not always anticipate. Children need a playspace where they can develop a sense of ownership, not only of their play, but of the landscape too. You will need to set time aside to consider common sense approaches to managing the environmental impact of the play sessions. These could include:

- children seeking advice from the janitor about how to look after an outdoor space
- everyone sticking to the expectations in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code about everyone’s rights and responsibilities when off-site. <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/practical-guide-all>
- organisers proactively engaging with the landowner or manager of the site. Have a look at Scottish Forestry’s *Forest Kindergarten Guidance for Landowners* which provides advice about choosing and using a woodland site for learning and play. It has a range of checklists, *Leave Less Trace Play Principles* and practical considerations to minimise the environmental degradation of a site whilst ensuring children can freely play. It is applicable to many natural environments in addition to woodland. <https://www.owlsotland.org/resources/resource-library/?channel=resources&resourcecat=5&type=6&keywords>
- children and staff undertaking simple acts of environmental stewardship. This may be a two-minute litter pick, a check of the area for dog mess, being eyes and ears for the landowner and reporting vandalism, graffiti, overflowing bins, etc.
- adults modelling appropriate values, attitudes and actions towards caring for the environment where play is facilitated
- adults considering the environmental impact of resources they introduce, especially outside. For example, glitter and other synthetic small items are difficult to clean up; playdough and human food could cause harm to wildlife if ingested
- everyone actively seeking to source loose parts in a sustainable approach.

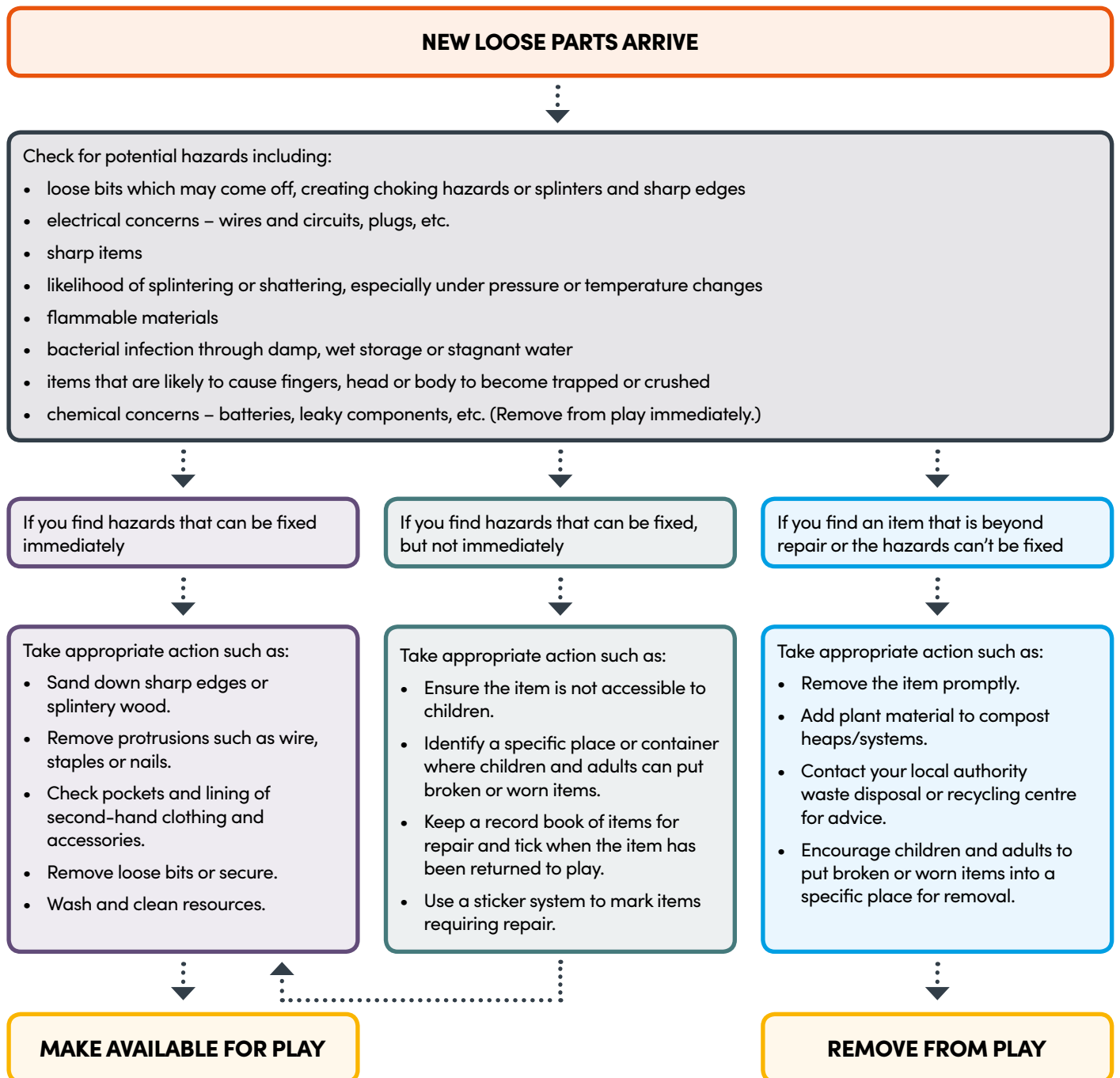
## Further information

- Scottish Government (2018) *Out to Play: Practical Guidance for Creating Outdoor Play Experiences in Early Learning and Childcare*. See Section 4.5 and 4.6 and the Appendices. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/out-play-practical-guidance-creating-outdoor-play-experiences-children/>
- Learning for Sustainability Scotland <http://learningforsustainabilityscotland.org> There is a range of support materials to help educators and playworkers think about the values, ethos and actions.



# Check loose parts before, during and after playing

The loose parts need to be safe enough for children to use. Set up a system to check all new items, regardless of where or how they were sourced. Common sense will be your best guide.



Remember that your organisation is responsible for the management, maintenance, supervision and disposal of any loose parts from the moment they are acquired.



# Moving loose parts – lifting and handling guidance

If you are moving big, heavy or awkward loose parts it's important to keep yourself and others safe. Simple reminders can be shared with children and adults to avoid back problems or painful experiences of things being dropped on toes. This advice is especially useful when getting items in and out of storage and during any building projects.

## Basic principles for good handling

### Stop and think

- Plan the transfer or lift – where is the load to be placed?
- Use appropriate handling aids or equipment.
- Is assistance required with the load?
- Prepare the working environment – remove obstacles.
- For a long lift, plan resting mid-way through.

### Position feet

- Feet apart, approximately shoulder width, giving a balanced and stable base.
- Leading leg as far forward as is comfortable.

### Adopt a good posture

- When lifting from a low level, bend the knees, without over flexing.
- Keep back straight.
- Keep shoulders level and facing same direction as hips.

### Get a firm grip

- Try to keep the arms within the boundary formed by the legs.
- The best position and type of grip will depend on the circumstances.
- Refer to the risk assessment.

### Keep close to the load

- Keep the load close to the body for as long as possible.
- Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body.

### Don't jerk

- Lift or transfer smoothly, keeping control of the load.

### Move the feet

- Do not twist the body when turning to the side, reposition the feet.

### Put down then adjust

- If precise positioning is required, put down first, then slide into desired position.

### Don't lift or handle more than can be easily managed

- There is a difference between what people can lift and what they can safely lift. If in doubt, seek advice or get help.

See <http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/manual.htm>



# Maintenance

**Daily maintenance includes the outdoor space where the children play. Like checking the loose parts, you have a number of options to deal with any hazards found.**

- Take immediate action to clear up litter, broken glass, dog fouling etc.
- Cordon off or mark clearly any hazards that can't be dealt with on the spot.
- Note any concerns which need to be addressed and pass them to the person responsible for health and safety, if you can't deal with the hazard there and then.
- Have an alternative area earmarked for use, if necessary.

## Involving children and teenagers in maintenance.

Some of the tasks involved in maintaining loose parts can be fun learning opportunities for children. They can learn to identify items that need action taken, undertake maintenance tasks (such as those in the flow chart on page 29) and be involved in record keeping.

Involving children and teenagers in maintenance of loose parts:

- encourages a sense of ownership and responsibility
- gives a different way to be involved in the project
- provides opportunities to practice real-life skills.

Certain aspects of loose parts play require specific maintenance measures, for example, sand pits require sand to be swept up and to be raked over regularly. Items used in mud play will need to be hosed down from time to time. Health Protection Scotland have produced guidance, *Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings*. This includes cleaning approaches and schedules for resources. Check this if it applies to your organisation.

The key is to be systematic. Work out what needs to be done and who is responsible, and ensure your system keeps going.

**“ We support schools to create ‘maintenance crews’ with older children. The ‘crew’ carries sand paper and tape and children know to approach them if they come across anything they think needs attention – the responsible older children will attempt to repair and highlight the issue to the playground staff in attendance.”**

(Lesley Fox, Smart Play Network)

## Further reading

- North Lanarkshire Council (undated) *This Place is Like a Building Site* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNXOfS\\_vjVM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNXOfS_vjVM)
- Scottish Outdoor Access Code [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)
- Potter, D. (1997) *Risk and Safety in Adventure Playgrounds*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.