From Policy to Play Provision

*Inclusion by design – Design by inclusion*

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Plan for today’s presentation

1. Introductions and context
2. Provide a brief background to the research project
3. Describe design and phases
4. Summarise key findings
5. Provide a rationale and significance for policy
6. Identify key questions
Examples of play research papers
Combination of methods was employed to identify relevant national policy that address play:

Survey distributed to Ludi members to elicit information on National Policy and relevant Ministries

Search of internet-based sites; websites of national ministries of health, education, children, culture, sports; health promotion agencies

Background: Play policy review

Play Policy Survey – RESPONDENTS

18 Responses in total representing:

- Bulgaria
- Estonia
- Germany
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Serbia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia
- United Kingdom
Community Parks and Playgrounds: Intergenerational Participation through Universal Design
(Ireland, 2017 – 2018)

Introducing the research team

Helen Lynch, PhD
Principal Investigator
Occupational Therapist

Alice Moore, MSc
Research Assistant
Occupational Therapist

Linda Horgan, MSc
Access Auditing
Occupational Therapist

Claire Edwards, PhD
Social Policy
Background rationale for the project

• **ISSUE OF SOCIAL INCLUSION**: Accessible and inclusive community environments are fundamental for enabling social inclusion.

• **FIT FOR PURPOSE**: Community environments such as parks and playgrounds have received little attention in relation to designing for diverse groups of users.

• **INCLUSION BY DESIGN**: The purpose of this research project was to analyse public parks and playgrounds in one local council area (Cork City Council), as part of a study on intergenerational use of local parks and playgrounds, determine the policy-play-provision connection, from a UNIVERSAL DESIGN perspective.

Universal design means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, **without the need for adaptation or specialized design** (UNCRPD, 2007, p. 4)

7 PRINCIPLES OF UD (Connell et al, 1997)
Phase 1: Review of literature and policy

Phase 2: Analysis of international guidelines for the design and provision of inclusive community playgrounds

Phase 3: Developing the PlayAUDIT

Phase 4: Exploring the perspectives of users and providers and conducting PlayAUDITs
Findings from the review of literature

• International literature recognises that outdoor spaces such as parks and playgrounds are important sites for community integration, belonging, social cohesion, health and wellbeing.

• No studies were found that explored the application of Universal Design to the design of playgrounds, for effectiveness or impact on use.

• Few studies have explored diverse-users’ perspectives on intergenerational use of parks and playgrounds from a.

• There is no research to date from Irish children with disabilities, on their experiences of community inclusion in parks and playgrounds.
Findings from the review of policy

• A lack of national and regional policy on inclusive outdoor play compounds the exclusion of children with disabilities and their families from playgrounds.

• However, even where policy exists, a lack of guidelines can also contribute to poor play provision, and although a UD approach has been promoted, little is known about how to apply UD in playground design.

• There is a need to review, analyse and synthesise good practice in inclusive policies and guidelines for outdoor playground design and provision in order to design for inclusion more effectively.

Phase 2: Analysis of guidelines for inclusive community playgrounds
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Guideline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1. Access inside out: A guide to making community facilities accessible (DESSA, 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Play for all: Providing play facilities for disabled children (DESSA, 2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe (UK)</td>
<td>3. Developing accessible play space: a good practice guide (Dunn, Moore, and Murray, 2003)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Can play, will play: disabled children and access to outdoor playgrounds (John and Wheway, 2004)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Design of play areas (RoSPA, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Inclusive play (The Sensory Trust, n.d.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Design guidance for play spaces (Houston, Worthington, and Harrop, 2006)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Design for play: A guide to creating successful play spaces (Shackell, Butler, Doyle, and Ball, 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Inclusive design for play: Mainstreaming inclusive play good practice briefings (Play England and KIDS, 2009)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Playspaces: planning and design (Play Wales, 2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Developing and managing play spaces (Play Wales, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>13. The good play space guide: “I can play too” (State of Victoria, 2007)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Space for active play: Developing child-inspired play space for older children (Jennings and Carlisle, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>16. EveryBODY plays! (PlayCore, GameTime, and Utah State University, 2008)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. Playground accessibility – ADA compliance (Assistive Technology Partners, n.d.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Me2: 7 principles of inclusive playground design (PlayCore and Utah State University, 2010, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>21. Inclusive Play Space Guide (Playright, 2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings**

- Although **international rights-based documents promote Universal Design** as a means of ensuring accessible and inclusive environments are provided:
  - **Universal Design is under-represented in the 21 international and national guideline documents.**
  - There is a **gap between the promotion of Universal Design, and guidelines on how to operationalise it** in parks and playgrounds.
  - There is also a **gap in knowledge on how to include users in a process of community consultation.**
8 Principles

• Principle 1: A rights-based perspective, underpinned by inclusive social policy
• Principle 2: Respect for diversity of age, gender, size, ability, socioeconomic, ethnicity and cultural differences
• Principle 3: Intergenerational spaces: Incorporating amenities as well as play opportunities
• Principle 4: Play value
• Principle 5: Positive approach to risk and challenge in policy and provision
• Principle 6: Design by inclusion: Involving users in the design process
• Principle 7: Inclusion by design: Universal Design
• Principle 8: Designed for inclusion but 100% accessibility and usability is not the goal

21 Core Considerations

• Consideration 1: Free access/ Entrance fee
• Consideration 2: Maintenance/ Vandalism
• Consideration 3: Fencing
• Consideration 4: Surfacing
• Consideration 5: Play sufficiency
• Consideration 6: Cost-effective design
• Consideration 7: Capacity building
• Consideration 8: Inter-professional working
• Consideration 9: Flow/ Layout
• Consideration 10: Segregation/ No segregation
• Consideration 11: Local policy for inclusion
• Consideration 12: Play component selection
• Consideration 13: Ground level/ Elevated
• Consideration 14: Making the ‘cool’ piece most accessible
• Consideration 15: Location
• Consideration 16: Character
• Consideration 17: Meeting the needs of the community
• Consideration 18: Funding
• Consideration 19: Sustainability
• Consideration 20: Size
• Consideration 21: Storage
Playability Model

Integrating principles, considerations and play value for good practice in Universal Design play provision

Play Value at the center

Phase 3: Developing the PlayAUDIT
PlayAUDIT: Playground Assessment of Universal Design and Inclusion Tool

Step 1: Play Value audit
- Based on an observation of the playground
- Assess play value of playground through analysing play types and potential affordances

Step 2: Universal Design audit
- Based on observation of park-playground unit
- Accessible routes to and from the park
- Accessible pathways within playground
- Accessible components
- Adheres to national standards for accessibility
- Incorporates best practice guidelines for Universal Design

Step 3: Usability audit
- Based on a walk-and-talk audit with users
- Personal experiences of barriers and enablers
- Routes, pathways, usability of play components
- Personal play preferences
- Subjective play value identified

Phase 4: Conducting the PlayAUDITs
Introducing the park-playground units

Fitzgerald’s park  Lough Mahon park  Tory Top park  Gerry O Sullivan park  Glenamoy Lawn park

5 park-playground units, from Cork City Council area

Data generation

Step 1:
5 Play value audits

Step 2:
5 Universal Design Audits

Step 3:
Usability Audits with child-adult units

Step 4:
Interviews with park and playground providers
Step 1: Findings from the Play Value Audits

Characteristics of the playground (informed by Woolley & Lowe, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities for different types of play</th>
<th>Fitzgerald's park</th>
<th>Gerry O Sullivan park</th>
<th>Lough Mahon park</th>
<th>Tory Top park</th>
<th>Glenamoy Lawn park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moveable equipment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different sizes and types of spaces</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landform</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural materials</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obvious physical boundaries such as fencing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of surfacing materials</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: Findings from analysis of the physical environment: Universal Design Audits

- Playgrounds are **not designed to be used by all ages**.
- Pathways in playgrounds are **not designed to lead equally to all components**.
- Pathways and surfacing are **typically not differentiated using colour or texture**.
- Playground components are **not easy to use independently** for children with physical, sensory, and/or emotional difficulties.
- Few playground components have **ramps or platforms** for ease of transferring.
Size and space for approach and use but not low physical effort

An example from the CEUD project shows different climbing components that accommodate users of different skill level.

However, not all users can access these climbing structures as a consequence of disability or undeveloped climbing skill.

Further accessible routes (for example, ramps), foot supports and accessible handgrip handles (on the climbing wall) that accommodate users of different sizes and abilities could be considered so that all users can access the highest point in the playground. Such design solutions would facilitate greater inclusion and maximize play value.

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Step 3: Findings from the Usability Audits

- Usability was assessed by conducting walk-and-talk interviews in the playgrounds or an alternative site of choice for the participants:
  - 10 child-adult units
    - 32 participants overall, including diverse ages, genders and abilities: from 3-68 years
    - 4 of these participants were responsible for park/playground provision
    - Child-adult units included adults and children with varied physical, sensory, cognitive and emotional characteristics that translate into specific restorative environmental needs
  
- In general, the users reported feeling welcome in their local park but not enjoying being there at certain times when it is busy or when gangs of teenagers gather.

- The playgrounds were identified as being most stimulating and enticing for younger children rather than 9-10-year-olds, and not at all accessible for children with significant mobility or visual impairments.
Overall playability

• Although the playgrounds appeared to provide stimulation and challenge, the children and adults who used these spaces told us a different story:

  • Only one site was designed with inclusion in mind
  • **Components did not provide** enough height, speed, or challenge
  • Poor accessibility to the play opportunities in all sites- specially for children with visual, social and physical impairments

• These five parks and playgrounds were **used frequently but were not always the most favourite** or important playspaces for these users.

Summary of child perspectives

• **Seeking a place for play and restoration**: the main reasons children used their local playground was because an adult brought them there, and this was associated with wanting to play and have fun.

• **Affordances that met their play needs**: Children reported on their favourite play activity, which most commonly was climbing on climbing walls and slides.

• **Not a place of inclusion**: for children with mobility or sensory impairments, most playgrounds were not places of fun.
Findings: children with physical, social, cognitive & visual impairments

- **Nowhere to go** - no ramps or poor ground surfacing
- **No way in** - raised kerb edges - no access
- **Nothing to do** - accessible route to playground, but no accessible playground components
- **Nowhere near** - no inclusive playground nearby
- **No challenge** - does not provide risk-rich play experiences
- **No safe boundary** - no fencing in inclusive playground to prevent children running away
- **No** - one size does not fit all! designs that assume all children with same size have same play preferences and abilities

Key recommendations
Balancing the 7 Principles of Universal Design with Play Value Principles

### 7 Principles of UD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles for play value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equitable use</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility in use</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Simple and intuitive use</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Perceptible information</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Tolerance for error</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low physical effort</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Size and space for approach and use</strong></td>
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**PLAY VALUE AT THE CENTRE**

1. Establish international good practice on applying Universal Design to playgrounds

2. Establish standards and guidelines for the Universal Design of inclusive community parks and playgrounds

3. Develop guidelines for engaging in community consultation with diverse user groups, including children

**TAILORED DESIGN BY PARTICIPATION**
To conclude

• Applying a universal design approach to designing for play is complex and somewhat obscure when we consider the need to also provide for high play value.

• Further work is needed to translate universal design principles into a design approach that ensures high play value for as many children as possible.

• It is clear that there is a need to develop space-oriented children’s policy that specifically addresses play and playspace design as a fundamental aspect of socio-spatial inclusion (Gill, 2008; Prellwitz & Lynch, in press; Yantzi, Young, & McKeever, 2010).
Three questions for discussion

How can outdoor play be a reality for children with diverse abilities and their families/carers?

Can Universal Design support effective outdoor play provision for all or are there other approaches that merit greater focus of study?

What can we recommend to policy makers, to strengthen a rights-based approach to outdoor play provision, and design for social inclusion?

Thank You!

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