

POOR PLAYGROUND INSPECTION REPORTS LEADING TO WASTEFUL EXPENDITURE

This fact sheet is based on handouts from 2 seminars given at IOG in September 2005 and repeated at a DCE exhibition in April 2006

THE CHEAPER THE INSPECTION — THE MORE IT CAN COST

- An education authority made their equipment more dangerous by fencing it off – the annual inspection report listed Standard failures but failed to assess that they were minor and the risks acceptable.
- Two city councils removed a large number of swings – the annual inspection reports had told them that they failed the European Standard – yet it was a minor technical fail and the swings were safe to use and probably had a life expectancy well in excess of 15 years.
- A metropolitan authority added small extensions to their impact absorbing surfaces, at great cost, even though the increase in safety was minimal. The modifications were not “reasonably practicable”.

Too many councils see annual inspections as a necessary evil, which must be endured, rather than a tool to be used. The result is that annual inspections are contracted without any reference to quality or purpose resulting in poor advice being given, leading to unnecessary remedial works and/or good equipment being removed.

An annual inspection should be a management tool, which can increase efficiency, ensure resources are targeted and be part of a process of quality control and continuous improvement.

When ordering annual inspections playground managers should decide how the reports will be used to save money and increase effectiveness. Ensuring the priority criteria in the reports are similar to those used in your own inspections can greatly assist in quality control.

Quality reports, based on Risk Assessment, that advise on equipment that is fit for use without modification, can ensure that you have sufficient resources to tackle those problems where significant reductions in risk are possible.

Remember modifying one piece of equipment because of poor advice can waste thousands of pounds.

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