

Help us shape our Neighbourhood Play Spaces

A community
consultation
feedback report
2026

NCC Communities Team

Newcastle
City Council 



Contents

1	<u>Executive Summary.</u>	Page 3
2	<u>Introduction</u>	Page 6
3	<u>Our Approach</u>	Page 9
4	<u>Our Findings</u>	Page 12
5	<u>A closer look at Neighbourhood Play Spaces</u>	Page 19
6	<u>Conclusion, recommendations and next steps</u>	Page 55
7	<u>Appendix</u>	Page 60

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the citywide engagement exercise exploring how residents use their neighbourhood play spaces and what improvements they believe are needed to create safer, more inclusive, and better-maintained parks. The consultation captured the voices of children, young people, parents, carers, older residents and community users across Newcastle's neighbourhoods. Participants provided detailed insights into what makes play spaces welcoming, what prevents families from using them, and what investment priorities should guide the next phase of the programme.

Summary of Engagement Approach

Engagement was delivered through an accessible online survey, gathering 181 detailed responses from a diverse range of residents, including children as young as five, families with multiple children, young people, adults, and older residents. Respondents were asked about their reasons for visiting local parks, the equipment they use, what they value, barriers to access, and the improvements they want to see. Data was analysed by individual park to identify both shared themes and location-specific priorities.

Summary of Key Findings

Strong demand for new, varied and age-appropriate play equipment

Across all neighbourhoods, residents consistently requested the return or introduction of fundamental items such as swings, slides, climbing frames, accessible roundabouts, and sensory play equipment. Many parks currently have little or no usable equipment due to removal, disrepair or vandalism.

Safety concerns are widespread

The most common issues limiting park use were antisocial behaviour, broken glass, drug paraphernalia, poor lighting, loose dogs, and damaged or missing equipment. Residents repeatedly highlighted that these factors make spaces feel unsafe, especially at dusk or when children are playing independently.

Maintenance and care are as important as new investment

Poor upkeep, flooding, litter, overgrown vegetation, vandalism, and lack of bins, was a recurring barrier. Communities frequently noted that parks feel neglected and require routine maintenance to build trust and continued usage.

Accessibility and inclusivity must improve

Families emphasised the need for accessible surfaces, ramps, sensory planting, inclusive equipment, usable paths, and fenced areas that protect younger children. Barriers for children with mobility needs and neurodiverse children were highlighted frequently.

Desire for social spaces and nature-rich environments

Residents value green spaces, trees, hills, wildlife, and opportunities for relaxation. Many asked for benches with backs and armrests, shaded areas, and places for quiet play or socialising, reflecting the multifunctional role parks play in community wellbeing.

Key findings by park

Denton Dene South

Residents value nature and open space but note the absence of a functional play park, antisocial behaviour (motorbikes, drugs), flooding and safety issues. Strong calls for a full play area, lighting, fencing, drainage improvements, and family facilities such as toilets or a café.

Brunswick Recreation

Residents value its proximity but report very limited equipment, lack of fencing, dog fouling and youth loitering. Requests include swings, slides, sensory play, shaded areas, benches, and secure boundaries.

Nuns Moor

Highly valued for nature and community, but suffers from broken equipment, litter, rats, overcrowding, antisocial behaviour, and poor lighting. Families request more bins, expanded play areas, toddler and teen zones, soft surfacing, and improved safety features.

Swan Recreation Ground

Used for football and socialising but has minimal and damaged equipment, safety concerns and antisocial behaviour. Requests focus on more equipment, CCTV, lighting, and soft surfacing.

St Lawrence Road

One of the most frequently described as neglected. Only a damaged slide remains; vandalism, drug paraphernalia, broken glass, fires, poor lighting and overgrown bushes make the space feel unsafe. Residents want new equipment for all ages, secure fencing, lighting, bins, seating, and greater maintenance, with some suggesting a splash pad or youth space.

The Tute (Westerhope Institute)

Popular but too small, with equipment only suitable for toddlers. Older children are bored, and some equipment is broken. Calls for expanded play provision, secure gates, soft surfaces, more seating, and possibly a skate area.

Exelby Close Park

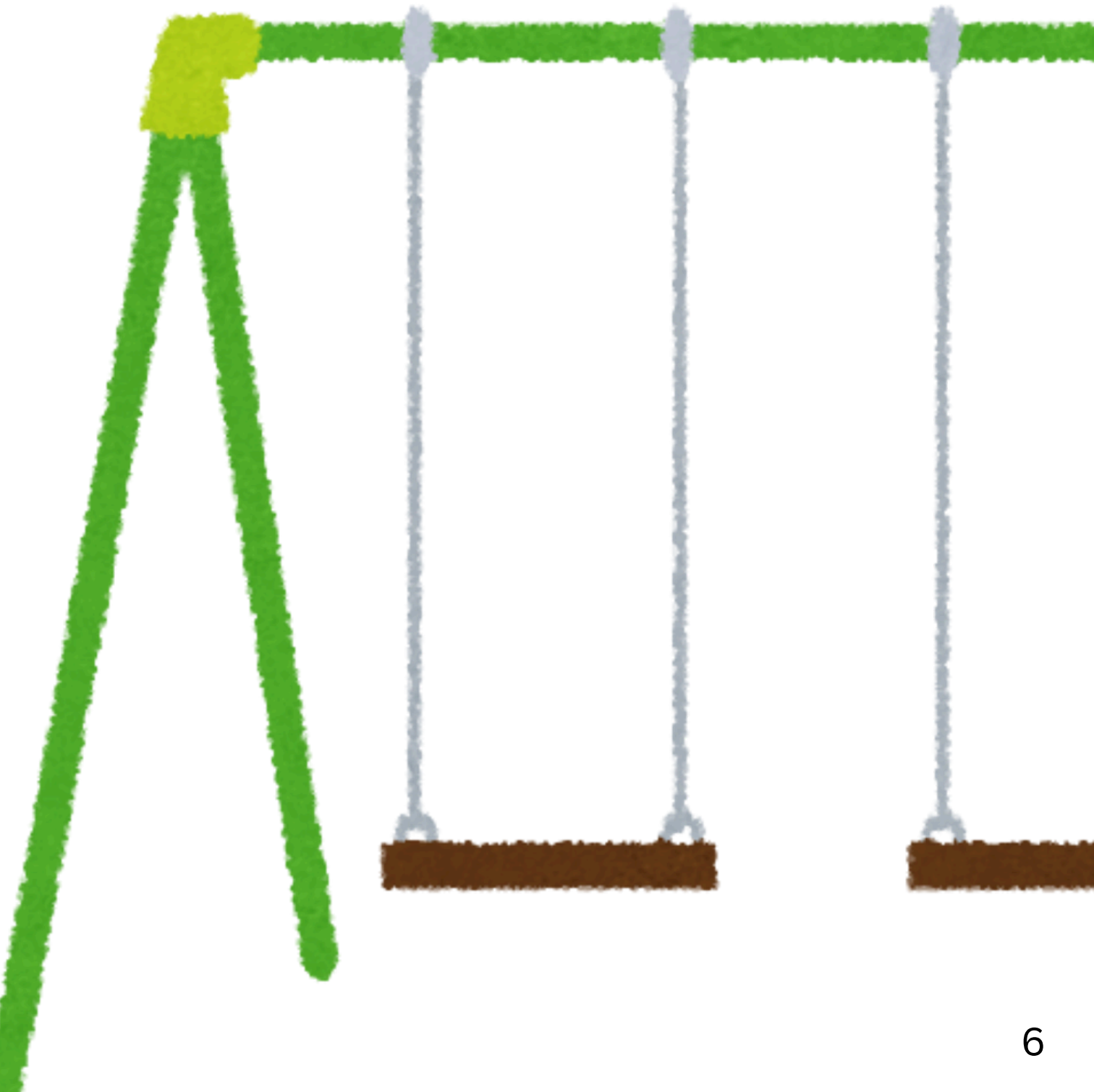
One of the most severely affected parks. Almost all equipment has been removed or fallen into disrepair, and flooding is a persistent issue. Residents call it derelict and unsafe. Strong demand for full reinvestment including drainage, fencing, swings, slides, benches, and sensory play.

Conclusion

The consultation demonstrates that neighbourhood play spaces are highly valued but, in many cases, severely under-resourced and in poor condition.

Across all parks, communities want **safe, well-maintained, inclusive** and **imaginative** spaces that support children's play, family socialising, and community life. The findings clearly show both the urgency for investment and the strong community willingness to engage in shaping the future of these spaces.

Introduction



Introduction

Newcastle's parks and play spaces are at the heart of community life, places where children grow, families connect, and people of all ages enjoy the benefits of being active outdoors. Building on extensive community consultation and the strategic direction set out in the *Newcastle Play Space Plan 2024* and the *Accessible and Inclusive Play Area Plan 2025*, the Council is now embarking on the next phase of investment: improvements to **seven** neighbourhood play areas across the city. These sites were identified because they have not benefited from significant previous investment or because they sit within communities where there are gaps in accessible, high-quality local provision.

Brunswick Recreation, Castle Ward

Exelby Close, Parklands Ward

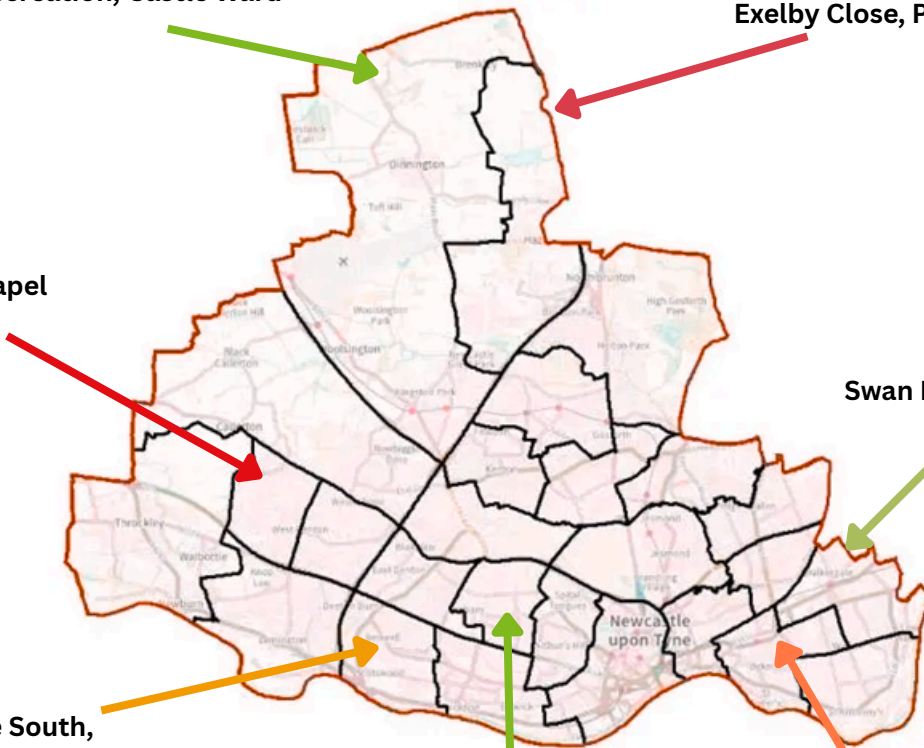
The Tute,
Westerhope
Institute, Chapel
Ward

Swan Rec, Walkergate Ward

Denton Dene South,
Benwell & Scotswood Ward

Nunsmoor, Arthurs Hill
Ward

St Lawrence Road, Byker Ward



The aim of this programme is to ensure that every neighbourhood has access to **safe, welcoming, and inclusive play spaces** that reflect the needs and aspirations of the people who use them most, children, young people, families, and carers. This means delivering spaces that go beyond minimum standards: places that feel cared for, offer a wide range of meaningful play opportunities, support health and wellbeing, and foster community pride. It also means designing with intention: improving accessibility for disabled children and those with long-term conditions, creating opportunities for social connection, supporting biodiversity, and addressing barriers such as poor lighting, litter, antisocial behaviour, and lack of facilities, concerns repeatedly raised through recent consultations.

Our **vision for play in Newcastle** is clear:

Every child and young person should be able to play, explore, and thrive in spaces that are inclusive, inspiring, safe, and rooted in the character and needs of local communities. This vision aligns with key city priorities including Health and Wellbeing, Liveable Neighbourhoods, the Net Zero Newcastle 2030 Action Plan, and the Council Plan 2024–2027, ensuring that investment in play supports wider ambitions for a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable city.

This report brings together what communities have told us, the data and evidence informing investment decisions, and the opportunities ahead. It is intended to support residents, council officers, planners, and elected members in working together to shape seven neighbourhood parks.

The success of these spaces depends on how well they meet the needs of local children, families, and communities. Engagement is therefore central to this project. Our strategy was to engage with local people using an online survey:

- **Online Engagement:**
 - Online via Let’s Talk Newcastle with site plans, timelines, survey and feedback forms.
- **Compliance and Inclusion:**
 - Adherence to GDPR, Gunning Principles, and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
 - Accessible formats such as Easy Read and sensory materials to ensure every voice is heard.

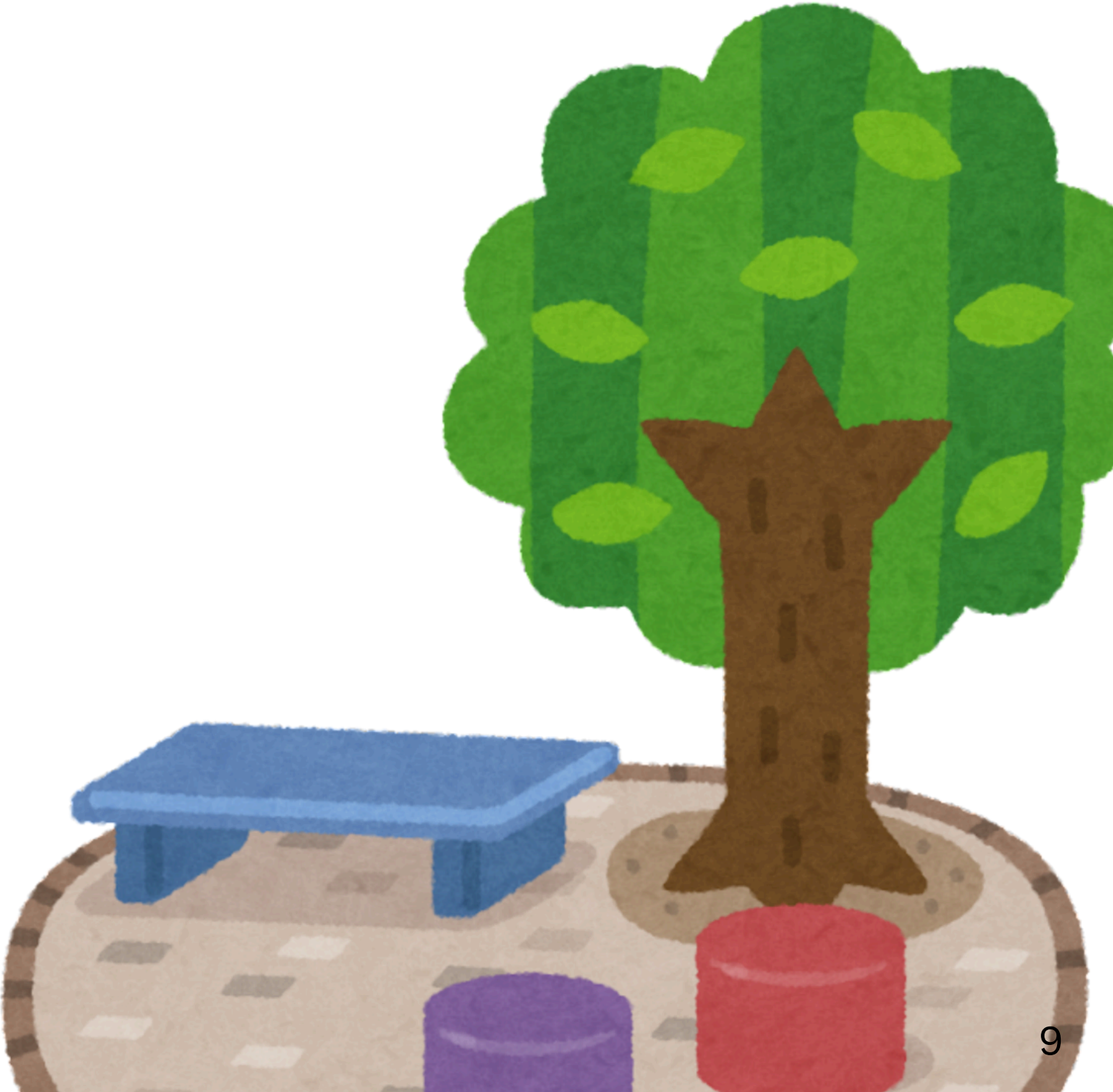
This approach ensures that designs are informed by lived experience, removing barriers to play and creating spaces that foster community pride and wellbeing.

“The area outside the main play park at Paddy Freemans was always a favourite of ours, my children one of whom is in a wheelchair, could all play together. There needs to be more of these areas in more parks and of course accessible swings are always a hit !”

Facebook comment



Our Approach



Our Approach

Newcastle City Council's Communities Team have undertaken a community consultation exercise in seven neighbourhood parks across the city on behalf of the Estate and Playground Management Team. The aim of the consultation was to understand the priorities of local people, especially children and their families. The purpose of the consultation and engagement activity is to provide insight into the needs of the communities. And that decisions made about the seven neighbourhood sites have been influenced by a range of communities who may or may not access the parks.

In alignment with the Newcastle Accessible and Inclusive Play Area Plan and the Newcastle Play Space Plan 2024, both of which set out clear recommendations for enhancing play provision across the city over the next five years, the first phase of engagement focused on four priority parks where investment would significantly strengthen accessibility and inclusive play: Blakelaw Park, Elswick Park, Ouseburn Park, and the Tyne Riverside Country Park.

Building on this foundation, this report presents the findings from Phase Two, which expands the programme to seven neighbourhood play spaces, exploring how local communities use these parks, the barriers they face, and the improvements they believe are most urgently needed. These parks are:

- **Brunswick Recreation**, Castle Ward
- **Denton Dene South**, Benwell & Scotswood
- **Exelby Close**, Parklands
- **Nuns Moor**, Arthurs Hill
- **St Lawrence Road**, Byker
- **Swan Rec**, Walkergate
- **The Tute**, (The Westerhope Institution), Chapel

The Communities Team worked in collaboration with:

- Local Councillors
- Newcastle City Council Landscape Design Team
- Community CVS Groups
- Ward Committees
- Local residents

We contacted partners from Newcastle City Council, and Community & Voluntary Groups requesting any recent reports from community consultation about green spaces, local parks and play areas.

Engagement Phases

The Communities Team designed consultation plan that had opportunities for people who wanted to participate. This included children and young people, disabled people and those who have English as a second language.

To ensure we adequately and authentically represented resident voices, we went back to basics and our engagement was centred around one simple question. **“Help us shape our neighbourhood play spaces”**.

Phase 1

Identified key stakeholders including:

- Local Councillors
- Local community groups



Phase 2

- Created an online Let’s Talk page.
- Created online comms plan and publicity and promoted the online survey via social media and email.
- Contacted community organisations and local residents via the Communities Team Neighbourhood contacts.

Summary of Engagement Activity

Online Consultation

- **181** forms completed



Invited to Two Ward Committee Meetings

- Chapel
- Parklands

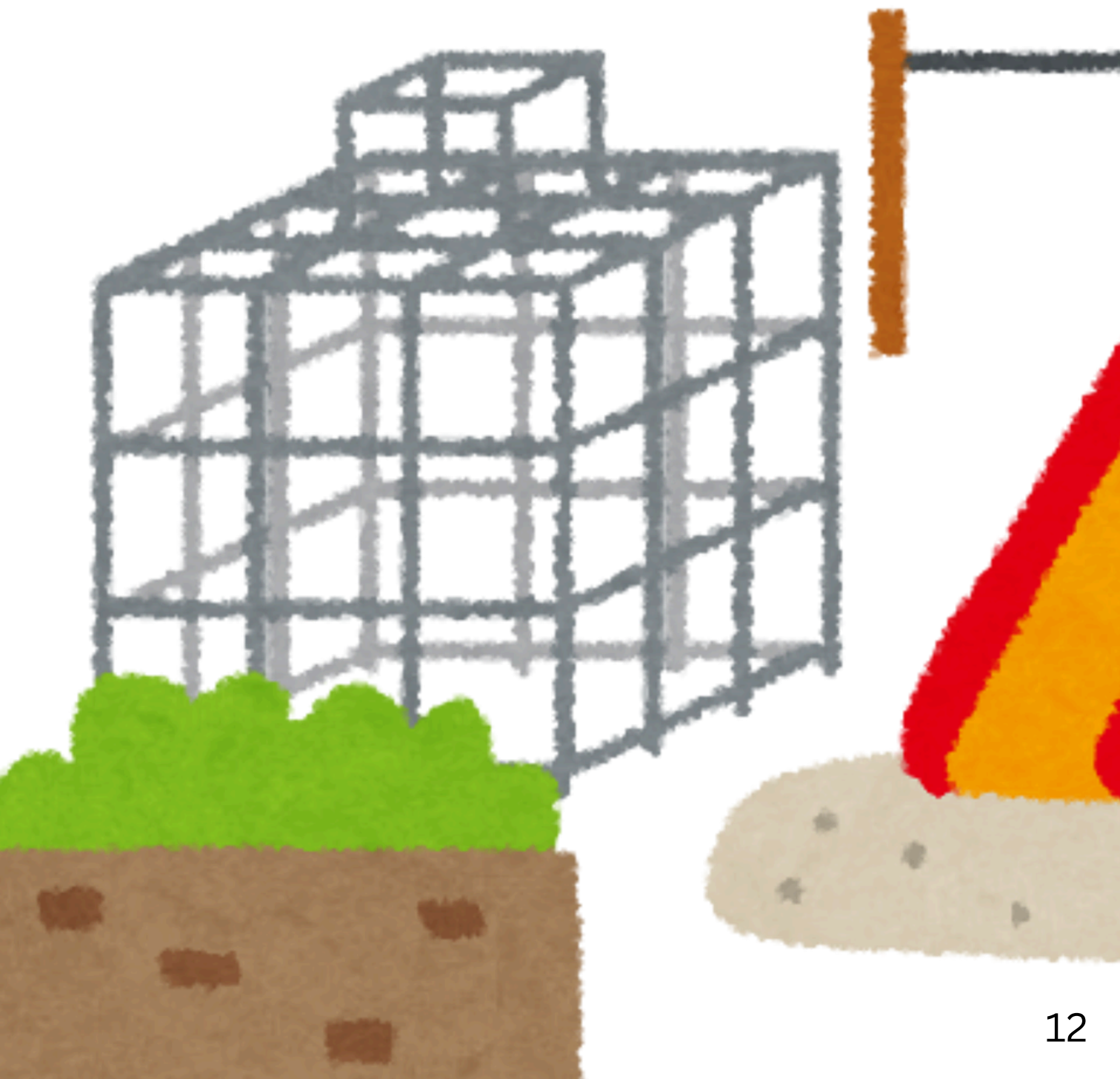


Online Engagement

- Social Media reach: **42,600**
- Social Media Views: **67,700**
- **170** comments, **67** likes and **16** shares



Our Findings





What people told us about going to neighbourhood play parks

Neighbourhood play spaces are vital to everyday life in Newcastle, offering children, young people, and families places to play, explore, socialise, and enjoy fresh air close to home.

Through the Help Us Shape Our Neighbourhood Play Spaces consultation, more than 180 respondents told us what matters most to them about their local parks and what currently prevents them from using them more often.

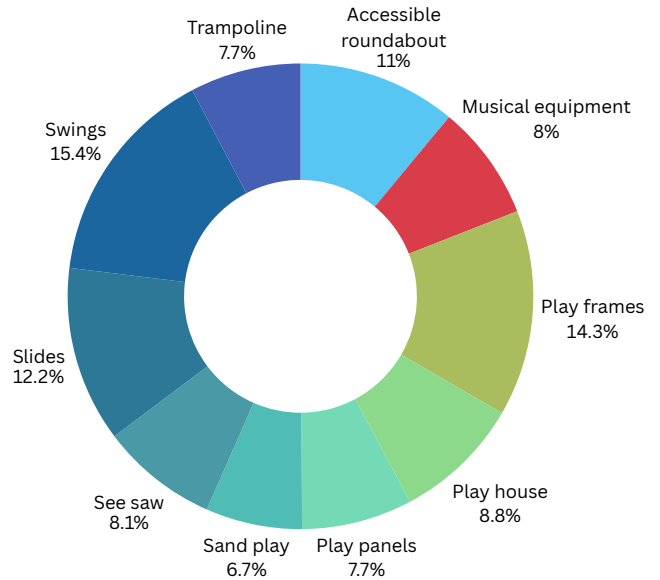
Their feedback provides powerful, site-specific insight into what neighbourhoods need and expect from the seven parks included in this phase of improvement.

The six things that most improve safety perception

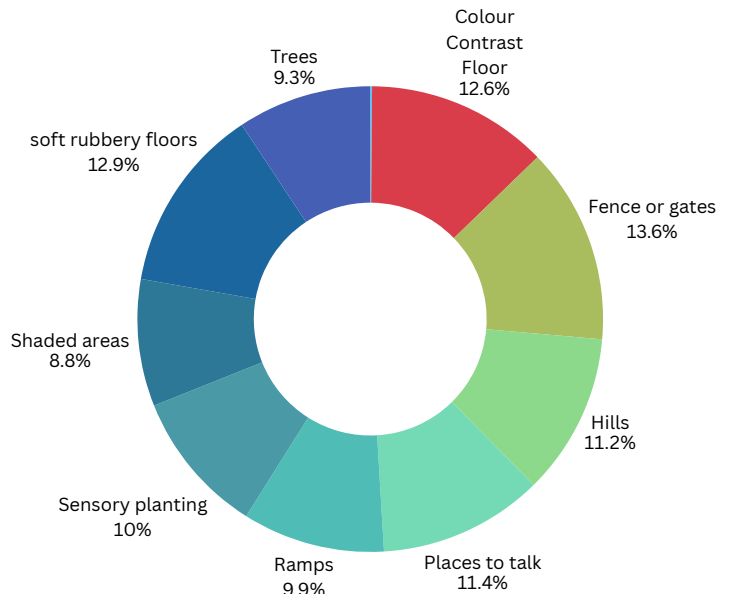
Across all neighbourhoods, residents want parks to be:

1. Open and visible
2. Enclosed and secure
3. Well-used by families
4. Known and familiar
5. Clean and maintained
6. Well-lit

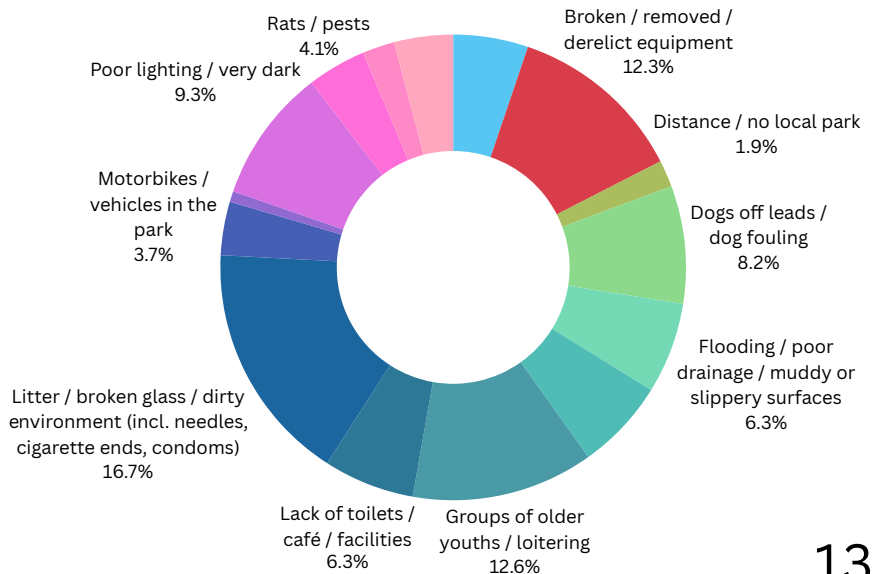
Which equipment would you like to see?



Which features would you like to see?



Barrier to using a Neighbourhood Park?



Discussion: The Bigger Picture

Across all neighbourhoods, residents consistently emphasised the importance of **having safe, accessible, and varied play spaces within walking distance of home**. Many families told us they visit their local park simply because it is nearby, easy to get to, and offers the chance for children to run, climb, socialise and burn off energy, particularly important for households without gardens or with limited indoor space.

Residents clearly value the **social and community role** of neighbourhood parks. Families frequently described parks as places to meet friends, spend time together, unwind, picnic, talk, and build confidence as well as spaces that support physical and mental wellbeing for all ages.

Many also said they wished their neighbourhood parks felt more “**cared for**,” noting that well-maintained parks in other parts of the city set a positive example of what is possible.

Key Insights from what people told us about **equipment** they would like for neighbourhood play spaces

1

Traditional play remains essential

Swings, slides, seesaws, climbing frames—all appear in the top rankings, showing that these core elements are still expected as standard.

2

Strong desire for inclusive equipment

Accessible roundabouts, sensory panels, and musical features all rank highly.

Residents clearly want neighbourhood parks designed for all children, including:

- wheelchair users
- children with sensory needs
- and children who need quieter, calmer play opportunities

3

Demand for more imaginative and expressive play

Playhouses, sand play, and sensory equipment suggest families want parks that encourage creativity, social interaction, and pretend play, not just physical activity.

“It’s in a nice community away from busy roads.”

Participant discussing Exelby Close Park



“Along with plenty of climbing, swinging, sliding apparatus, it'd be nice to see some more wooden sculptures of animals and similar”

Facebook comment

Who people go to the park with, Why they go, and What's good about parks?

Across all neighbourhoods, residents told us that parks play an important role in their everyday lives. The survey shows that **most people do not visit parks alone**, they go as part of family life, social time, or community activity. Many adults visit with **their children or grandchildren**, and parents often describe parks as a place to “let the kids burn off energy”, “play with friends”, or “spend time outdoors together”.

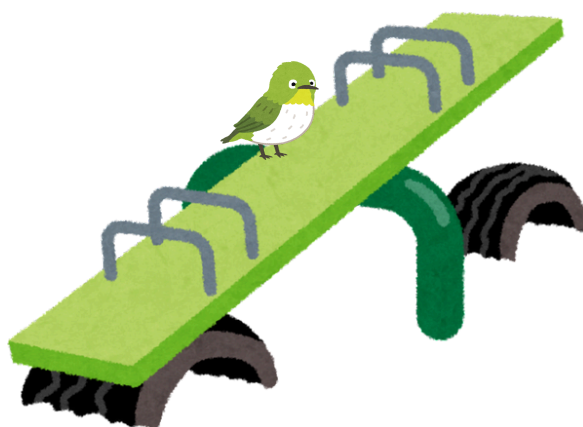
Others go with **friends, neighbours, youth groups or community groups**, making parks shared social spaces as much as places for play. Children themselves said they most often go with “mam or dad”, siblings, or friends from school or the neighbourhood, reinforcing just how important parks are for building friendships and social confidence.

Residents consistently described **why parks matter** to them. The most common reasons were to enjoy **fresh air, exercise, nature, and free outdoor play**. Many families highlighted the value of parks for **both physical activity and mental wellbeing**, saying parks help them “get outside”, “relax”, or “clear their head”. For households without gardens, which were notably common in several neighbourhoods parks provide essential open space for children to run, climb and explore safely. Parents also saw parks as a predictable, low-cost way for children to socialise and build confidence: places to “meet friends”, “see other families”, and “spend time together as a community”.

Residents also shared positive reflections about what is good about their local parks, even where they voiced frustrations about maintenance or lack of equipment. Many celebrated the green spaces, trees, wildlife, and natural scenery in and around neighbourhood parks. Others valued parks that feel open, visible and close to home, and described them as “good meeting places”, “somewhere safe to walk”, and spaces that help people feel connected to their area and the people in it. Where equipment is available and well maintained, families said they enjoy swings, slides, climbing frames, picnics, imaginative play, and simple opportunities to be active together.

Overall, the survey paints a clear picture: parks are social, health-supporting, and community-building places, especially important for families and children. When parks are welcoming, clean, and equipped, they become valued neighbourhood assets that help people feel proud of where they live and able to enjoy everyday life outdoors.

“It is on an open space, close to where we live.” Participant discussing Brunswick Recreation



“Lots of space, trees for climbing, pond, area for events, picnic field.”
Participant discussing Denton Dene South

Active, challenging play for older children

4

High rankings for climbing frames and trampolines highlight the lack of age-appropriate equipment for:

- children aged 7–12
- teens and pre-teens who currently “get bored quickly”

These findings mirror the broader themes residents raised elsewhere

5

Broken or removed equipment was the #1 barrier to using neighbourhood parks.

- The equipment residents most want aligns with those gaps.

Key Insights from what people told us about **features** they would like for neighbourhood play spaces

1

Social spaces matter as much as play equipment

Benches, quiet spaces, and shaded areas show that parks are being used as community social hubs, not just playgrounds.

2

Natural features are highly valued

Hills, trees, and sensory planting all score very strongly.

This aligns with community comments about wanting greener, calming environments rather than purely equipment-based play.

3

Inclusive play is essential

Residents repeatedly prioritise features supporting:

- SEND children
- Wheelchair users
- Visually impaired children
- Children needing quieter spaces

These priorities directly support the wider vision for inclusive play across Newcastle.

1

Repair, replace and improve play equipment

- Restore core equipment such as swings, slides, climbing frames and roundabouts, which were the highest-demand items in the rankings
- Provide age-appropriate equipment for toddlers, primary-aged children and older children/teens, as many parks currently only cater to very young children
- Install inclusive and sensory play items, such as accessible roundabouts, musical equipment and sensory play panels.

2

Improve safety through visibility, design and maintenance

- Ensure parks have open sightlines, good visibility and no hidden corners, residents said this is the biggest factor that makes them feel safe.
- Add or repair fencing and secure gates, especially to keep dogs and motorbikes out.
- Install better lighting, as darkness is a common reason families avoid parks.
- Reduce antisocial behaviour by improving natural surveillance, increasing community presence and designing out areas that invite loitering

3

Tackle cleanliness and maintenance issues

- Increase litter removal, especially broken glass, rubbish, drug waste and fire-damaged areas, these were the most frequently mentioned barriers to using parks.
- Improve drainage to reduce flooding, mud and waterlogging that make many parks unusable.
- Attend to vandalism, damaged surfaces and graffiti more quickly to restore public confidence in parks.

4

Create comfortable, welcoming community spaces

- Provide more benches with backs and armrests, which ranked as the top requested feature across all parks.
- Add picnic areas, quiet spaces and shaded spots so families can stay longer and use parks for social connection as well as play.
- Include places to talk and rest, which many residents see as core to community use of parks.

5

Strengthen natural and sensory elements

- Add trees, sensory planting, hills for rolling, and natural play features, all of which were highly valued across neighbourhoods.
- Maintain and enhance existing green space and woodland edges; residents said these features make parks more enjoyable and calming.

6

Ensure accessibility and inclusion for all

- Install soft rubber surfacing and ensure paths are accessible for pushchairs and wheelchairs.
- Add ramps to higher equipment and wide gates to improve access for disabled children and families.
- Use colour contrast and sensory features to support neurodivergent and visually-impaired children.

7

Improve facilities that support longer visits

- Provide or improve toilets and café/refreshment options, which many families said would increase their use of local parks.
- Install more bins and dog-waste points to improve upkeep and reduce litter.

Across all neighbourhoods, residents are asking for safe, clean, inclusive and well-equipped parks where children of all ages can play, families can socialise, and communities can enjoy nature close to home. The priorities above reflect consistent themes from every part of the dataset and provide a clear direction for improving neighbourhood parks.

Summary

Residents told us that neighbourhood parks are an important part of daily life, offering children and families safe, local places to play, meet others and enjoy fresh air. People value parks that feel clean, well-maintained and easy to access, especially for those without gardens.

Across all areas, residents said they want parks that feel safe, visible and cared for, with good sightlines, secure fencing, and spaces that are well-used by families. They also highlighted the need for better play equipment, including swings, slides, climbing frames and more inclusive features for children of different ages and abilities.

Natural features such as trees, planting and open green space are highly valued, along with places to sit, talk and relax. When parks are welcoming and well looked after, they strengthen communities, support health and wellbeing, and offer children vital opportunities for active, imaginative play.

A closer look at our seven neighbourhood parks



Brunswick Recreation Ground

Introduction: Brunswick Recreation Park is located in the north of the city and is part of the Castle Ward.

We received 6 online survey's about Brunswick Recreation

Issues:

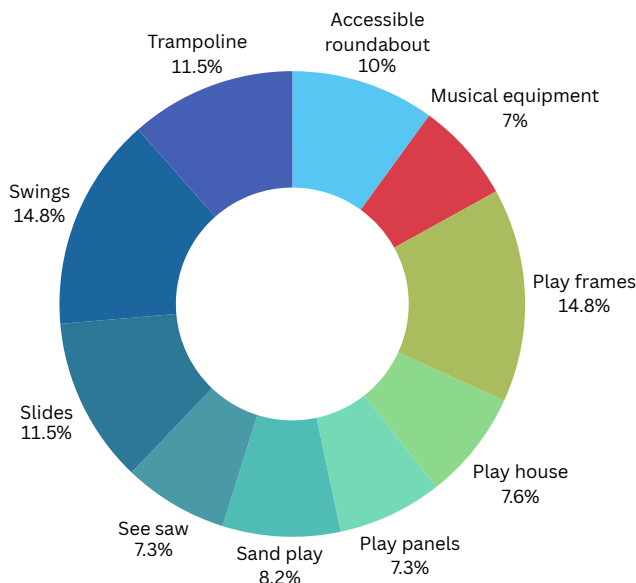
Residents consistently describe Brunswick Recreation Park as being in a state of severe decline, with many stating it is now derelict and "not usable."

- deterioration of almost all play equipment.
- broken, unsafe or rusting equipment.
- frequent flooding and waterlogging.
- a lack of secure fencing and gates.
- absence of bins, ongoing litter and dog fouling.

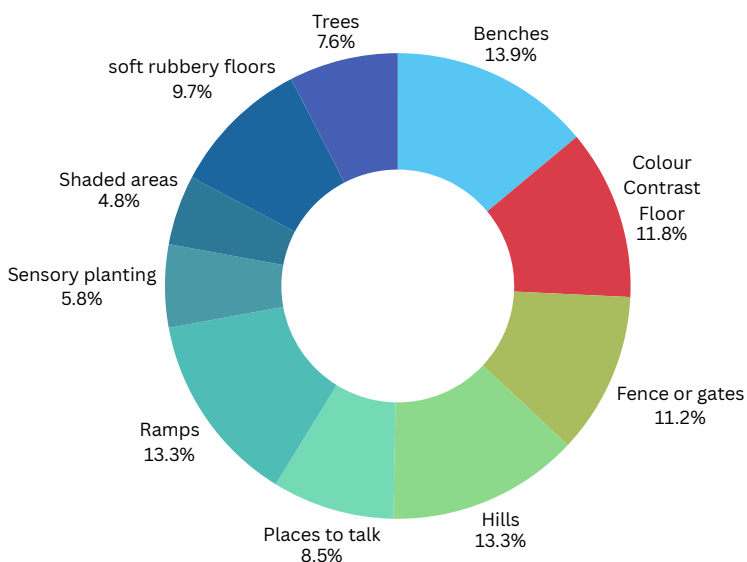
The six factors that would most improve people's sense of safety in Brunswick Recreation Ground

- Other families and people being present in the park.
- Open sight lines with no hidden corners.
- Tall or secure fencing around the play area.
- A generally positive feel of the surrounding area.
- Community presence and neighbour visibility.
- Clean, tidy conditions free from rubbish and broken glass.

Which equipment would you like to see?



Which features would you like to see?



Barriers to using the Park?

The data shows that the single biggest barrier to park use is the lack of age-appropriate, well-maintained, engaging equipment for children.

This theme represents the overwhelming reason families feel the park is not meeting their needs.

Other barriers are less frequent but still meaningful, including concerns about dog fouling, maintenance, and tidiness, all of which relate to the park's overall safety and usability.

What People Told Us About Visiting Brunswick Recreation Ground

Feedback gathered from local residents, families, and a young child provides a clear picture of how Brunswick Recreation Ground is currently used and perceived, as well as what people feel is missing from the space. Across all responses, several consistent themes emerged relating to why people visit the park, their experiences when using it, and the improvements they would like to see.

Overall, people told us that they value Brunswick Recreation Ground primarily because it is close to home and offers a convenient, accessible outdoor space. Families frequently described visiting to allow children to play, to get fresh air, to exercise, and to socialise with friends or relatives. Many also noted that the openness of the area and the green surroundings make it a pleasant meeting place or walking route, and some use it for dog walking or informal sports. Even the child who responded emphasised coming “to have fun,” often with a parent or friends.

Despite these positive aspects, there was overwhelming agreement that the park currently offers very little in terms of play opportunities. Several respondents expressed frustration that “there is nothing there,” with others stating that the lack of equipment particularly affects younger children. Parents consistently highlighted that there is almost no age-appropriate play provision, and some commented that neighbouring parks offer substantially more. As a result, families often feel that children become bored quickly, and many stressed the need for a complete refresh or remodelling of the play area.

Overall, the feedback paints a picture of a valued local green space that plays an important role in the daily lives of nearby residents. However, the current lack of play equipment and general underinvestment mean the park is not meeting the needs of the community, particularly for families with young children. There is a strong appetite for improved, diverse, accessible play provision, alongside practical features that enhance safety, cleanliness, and comfort. Respondents clearly see Brunswick Recreation Ground as a place that could, if improved, become a vibrant and inclusive hub for community activity, play, and social connection.

Key Insights from what people told us about **equipment** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

- 1** Both **Swings and Play frames** for exploring & climbing received the highest total scores and were mentioned by every respondent.
- 2** Traditional equipment remains highly valued
Items like Slides, Seesaws, and Playhouses also ranked strongly, and being mentioned by all respondents.

Demand for varied equipment indicates a desire for a “full play experience”

Every item in the equipment list was mentioned by all respondents, including:

4

- Musical equipment
- Sand play
- Sensory play panels
- Trampolines

Some participants said

- Families want variety, not just one or two pieces of equipment.
- The park is currently so under-resourced that anything new would be beneficial.

Sensory and inclusive equipment scores indicate a desire for a broader age and ability range.

5

Even though sensory panels and accessible roundabouts scored lower than climbing frames, their consistent presence in every ranking shows that:

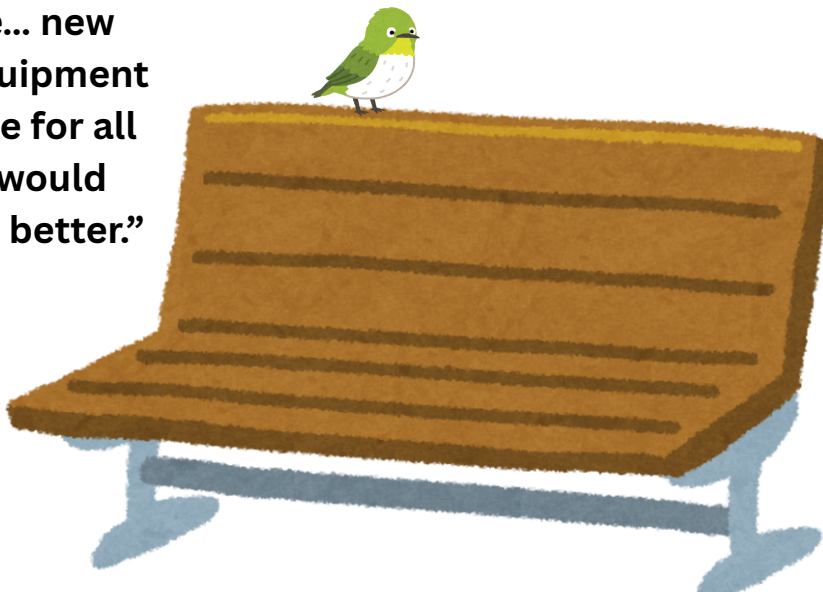
- Residents want a park that’s inclusive and accessible to more children, including those with additional needs.
- They value equipment that supports touch, sound, imaginative play, and accessibility, not just physical activity.

6

Trampoline demand shows interest in modern, dynamic play.

Residents do not simply want small improvements, they want a complete, modern, inclusive playground that meets the needs of a growing community.

“It’s on an open space... new play equipment suitable for all ages would make it better.”



“Brunswick park would massively benefit from swings and slides, there is currently nothing really for 8yrs and under.”

Key Insights from what people told us about **features** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

1

Comfort and usability features are the highest priority

The top-ranked feature was benches with backs and armrests, scoring the highest.

2

Accessibility improvements are extremely important

Both ramps to high-up equipment and colour contrast ranked very highly, appearing in all respondents' lists.

3

Safety-focused design features rank consistently well

Features like:

- Fencing or wide gates,
- Soft rubber flooring, and

Clear sightlines supported by colour contrast all scored strongly.

4

Natural play and nature-rich environments matter

Features like:

- Hills for rolling down,
- Trees for hide and seek, and
- Sensory planting

appear in every respondent's ranking.

5

Quiet, social, and calming spaces are also valued

The feature places to talk or places for quiet play ranks mid-high in the list.

6

Shaded areas are a clear unmet need

Though ranked lower overall, shaded areas were still mentioned by all respondents.

Who people go to the park with, Why they go, and What's good about parks?

Feedback from local residents shows that Brunswick Recreation Ground is primarily used as a shared family and social space. Most people told us they visit the park with their children, often alongside other family members or friends, making the park an important meeting point for both adults and young people. In one case, a child described visiting with "Mam or Dad," reinforcing the park's role as a safe and familiar everyday destination for local families.

People visit the park for many reasons, but the most common motivations include giving children the chance to **play outdoors**, enjoying **fresh air and exercise**, and spending time together as a family or community. Several respondents said they go to the park simply because it is **close to home**, making it an easy and convenient place to use regularly. Residents also value the park as a space for **walking, using open green areas**, and **socialising**, with many describing it as a good place to meet others or gather informally.

Despite the limited equipment currently available, residents identified several things they feel are positive about the park. People appreciate the **open space**, the sense of community, and the opportunity the park provides for **children to run around and play safely**. The green surroundings, including trees, plants, and natural features, help make it a relaxing environment where families can picnic, chat, or simply spend time outdoors. Even those who felt improvements were needed still recognised that the park offers a valuable local space where people can connect with nature and with each other.

How can we improve Brunswick play space?

1

Provide much better play equipment

- Add swings, slides, seesaws, climbing frames, and trampolines
- Offer equipment for all age ranges, especially younger children who currently “have nothing to do”.
- Include accessible equipment such as accessible roundabouts and sensory play panels.

2

Improve safety through design

- Install **fencing or wide gates** to stop dogs entering play areas.
- Add **soft, rubber safety surfacing** to reduce injury risk.
- Improve **lighting** to make the park feel safer, especially in the evenings.
- Maintain **clear sightlines**—residents value open spaces with no hidden corners.

3

Make the park more comfortable and welcoming

- Provide **benches with backs and armrests** so people can stay longer and supervise children comfortably.
- Create **shaded areas** for comfort in warm weather.
- Add **quiet places** for talking, resting, or calm play.

4

Improve maintenance and cleanliness

- Regularly remove **rubbish and broken glass** to keep the space child-friendly.
- Address **dog fouling** concerns through fencing and responsible-owner signage.
- Repair and maintain existing structures so children do not become “bored quickly”.

5

Add natural and sensory features

- Create **hills for rolling, trees for hide and seek**, and **sensory planting** to support outdoor exploration.
- Include features that support **sensory and imaginative play** for a wider range of children.

6

Increase inclusivity and accessibility

- Provide **ramps to elevated equipment**, colour-contrast features, and accessible pathways.
- Ensure equipment can be enjoyed by **children with mobility, sensory, or other additional needs**.

7

Modernise and expand the play area

Residents say the park needs “**remodelling**” and “**more equipment for the growing village.**”

People see the park as under-invested and **want a comprehensive modern play environment**, not just small additions.

Summary

The feedback gathered from residents about Brunswick Recreation Ground highlights a community that deeply values its local green spaces but feels let down by years of underinvestment and a lack of basic facilities. Across all comments, people described the park as an important social and family space, somewhere they go with children, friends, and relatives to enjoy fresh air, play, and spend time together. Yet despite this strong attachment, residents consistently reported that the area is not meeting their needs. The most pressing issue is the absence of suitable, engaging play equipment for children, which leaves families feeling that the park offers little to do and limits how long they can stay.

Alongside this, residents identified a range of practical improvements that would help transform the park into a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment. These include better maintenance, clearer sightlines, improved lighting, and fencing to create a secure play space. People also emphasised the importance of comfort and accessibility, highlighting the need for seating, shade, ramps, sensory planting, and features that support all ages and abilities.

Denton

Dene South

Introduction: Denton Dene South is located in the west of the city and is part of the Benwell and Scotswood Ward.

We received 36 online survey's about Denton Dene South and received responses from 15 families attending a local holiday activity session.

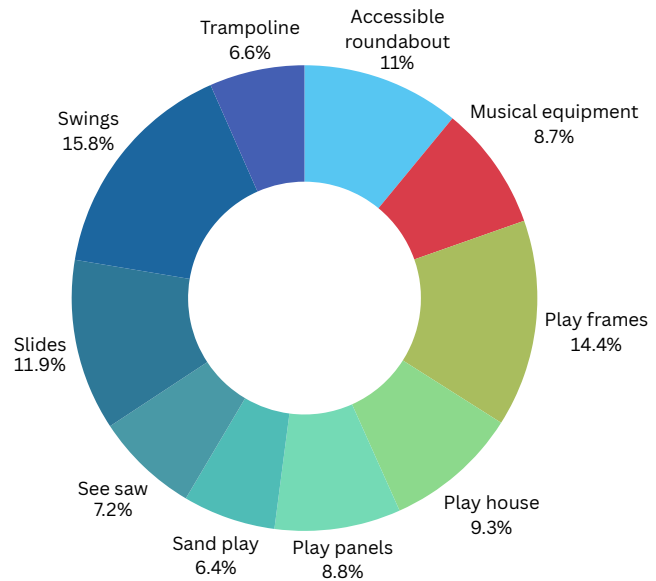
Issues: Residents said the most frequent issue was dogs off leads/big dogs followed by lack of toilets/café

- Lack of play equipment/amenities.
- Anti-social behaviour / groups of youths.
- Litter, broken glass & vandalism.
- Poor lighting / too dark.
- Motorbikes / e-bikes in the park.

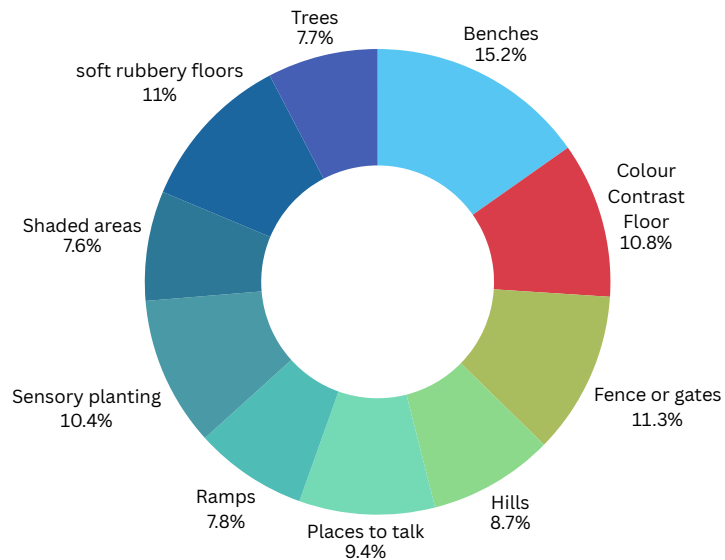
The six factors that would most improve people's sense of safety in Denton Dene South

1. Better lighting throughout the park.
2. Reducing anti-social behaviour.
3. Stopping motorbikes/e-bikes entering and riding through the park
4. Keeping dogs under control, particularly reducing big dogs or dogs off leads.
5. Improved cleanliness and maintenance.
6. Clearer, more defined park areas and increased visible activity, making it obvious where the play area is.

Which equipment would you like to see?



Which features would you like to see?



Barrier to using Denton Dene South?

Residents say they are put off using Denton Dene South due to a lack of play equipment, frequent anti-social behaviour, and issues like litter, broken glass and vandalism. Concerns about motorbikes riding through the park, dogs off leads, and poor lighting also make the area feel less safe and welcoming.

What People Told Us About Using Denton Dene South

Residents described Denton Dene South as an important local green space that offers open areas, nature, and a pleasant place to walk, run and meet others. Many people value the park's scenery, calm atmosphere and proximity to their homes, with some using it regularly for parkrun, dog walking or family time. However, they also highlighted several barriers that reduce how often they visit and limit the park's potential as a neighbourhood resource.

The strongest theme to emerge was the **lack of play equipment and facilities**. Families consistently reported that there is “nothing there” for children, noting the absence of swings, slides, climbing structures and other activity areas that would allow them to stay longer and use the space more meaningfully. Many said they walk to other parks, such as Newburn or Saltwell, because Denton Dene South cannot currently meet their children's needs. This absence of amenities was described as the single biggest reason residents do not visit more often.

Residents also expressed concerns about **anti-social behaviour**, including groups of teenagers, people drinking or using drugs, and individuals passing through the area from nearby hostels. These behaviours contribute to feelings of unease, especially for parents and young people. Alongside this, **litter, broken glass, vandalism and dumped items** such as mattresses and burnt bins were frequently mentioned as things that make the park feel neglected and less safe.

Another recurring issue was **motorbikes and e-bikes riding through the park**, which people found dangerous and intimidating. Families described these vehicles cutting across paths used by children, making them hesitant to let children play freely. **Dogs off leads**, especially larger dogs, were also a concern for several residents particularly children who reported feeling frightened.

In addition, residents highlighted **poor lighting** as a significant deterrent, stating that darker areas feel unsafe and discourage use in the evenings or winter months. Finally, some people said it is not always clear where the play or activity areas are meant to be because the site lacks defined spaces, seating and focal points. This contributes to a sense of emptiness rather than a welcoming community space.

Overall, residents want Denton Dene South to become a safer, cleaner and more engaging place where children can play, families can gather and the community can spend time with confidence. The feedback shows a strong desire for investment in equipment, clearer layout, improved lighting and action to reduce anti-social behaviour changes that would help the park reach its full potential as a valued neighbourhood asset.

Key Insights from what people told us about **equipment** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

- 1** **Swings, slides and climbing frames** are the most consistently requested core play items.
- 2** Residents want **inclusive and accessible equipment**, especially accessible roundabouts and sensory play items.
- 3** There is strong interest in **creative and imaginative play**, including playhouses, musical equipment and sensory panels.
- 4** **Traditional favourites** like seesaws and sand play remain important across age groups.
- 5** **High-energy equipment** such as trampolines and active climbing structures is valued, especially by children.

Key Insights from what people told us about **features** they would like for neighbourhood play spaces

- 1** **Comfortable seating so families can stay longer.**
- 2** **Safe boundaries** (fencing/gates) to protect children and prevent unwanted access.
- 3** **Safe ground surfaces** such as soft rubber flooring.
- 4** **Inclusive and accessible design**, supported by colour-contrast features and sensory planting.
- 5** **Spaces for quiet/social interaction**, giving families places to rest or chat.
- 6** **Natural play elements** like hills and trees, plus **shaded areas** for comfort.

Who people go to the park with, Why they go, and What's good about the park?

Residents told us they usually visit the park with their **children, wider family, friends or youth groups**, and younger children often come with **parents or grandparents**. People go to parks for a mix of reasons: to let children **play and burn off energy, to walk, run or exercise, to meet friends**, to **enjoy fresh air and nature**, or simply to relax away from busy roads. They highlighted several positive aspects of parks, including the **open green space**, attractive **trees and natural areas**, good places for **picnics and socialising**, and the sense of **peace and calm** that these spaces provide. Many residents also value parks that offer **good access, ample space for sports**, and opportunities for children to **climb, explore and use their imagination**.

How can we improve their play space?

1

Install high-priority play equipment

Add swings, slides, climbing frames, trampolines, accessible roundabouts and sensory play equipment, which were consistently the most requested items.

2

Improve safety and reduce anti-social behaviour

- Work with community safety partners to deter groups engaging in anti-social behaviour, drinking or drug use.
- Increase presence or visibility of enforcement where needed.

3

Prevent motorbikes and e-bikes from entering parks

Install fencing, gating or physical barriers to stop bikes cutting through areas used by children.

4

Address concerns about dogs

Provide clearer dog-control areas, signage, and consider designated dog-free play zones to support families with young children.

5

Improve lighting for safety and visibility

Install or repair lighting in darker paths and open areas so parks feel safer in evenings and winter months.

6

Enhance cleanliness and maintenance

- Increase litter removal and rapid response to broken glass, fly-tipping, vandalism and damaged equipment.
- Add more bins to prevent waste build-up.

7

Provide inclusive and accessible features

- Add soft-rubber surfacing, colour-contrast features, sensory planting, and accessible ramps to support all abilities.

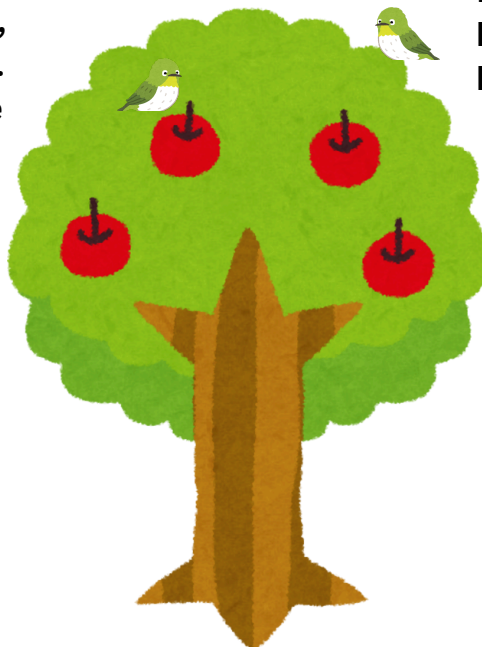
8

Add comfortable seating and places to gather

Summary

Residents value Denton Dene South as a local green space for walking, nature, and meeting others, but they feel it currently lacks the facilities needed to make it a welcoming neighbourhood park. The most common concern is the absence of play equipment, which means families often travel to other areas for children’s play. People also described issues with antisocial behaviour, motorbikes, dogs off leads, and litter or vandalism, all of which affect their sense of safety. Poor lighting was another factor that limits use, especially in the evenings. Residents said they would like to see a well-equipped, safe, and inclusive park, with priorities including swings, climbing frames, slides, accessible equipment, along with features such as comfortable seating, secure boundaries, soft surfacing, sensory planting, shaded areas, and clearer, better-defined play and social spaces.

“Looking forward to having a park at Denton Dene - very muchly needed! I've said it for a long time.. swings, monkey bars, accessible roundabouts, slides.. and a centre piece e.g. at Morpeth they have a pirate ship for climbing/sliding so maybes something similar.”
Facebook comment



“There is nothing there – we’d love a play area. We can walk to Denton Dene in 5 minutes but have to travel elsewhere for the kids.”

Exelby Close Park

Introduction: Exelby Close is located in the north of the city and is part of the Parklands Ward.

We received 48 online survey's about Exelby Close Park

Issues:

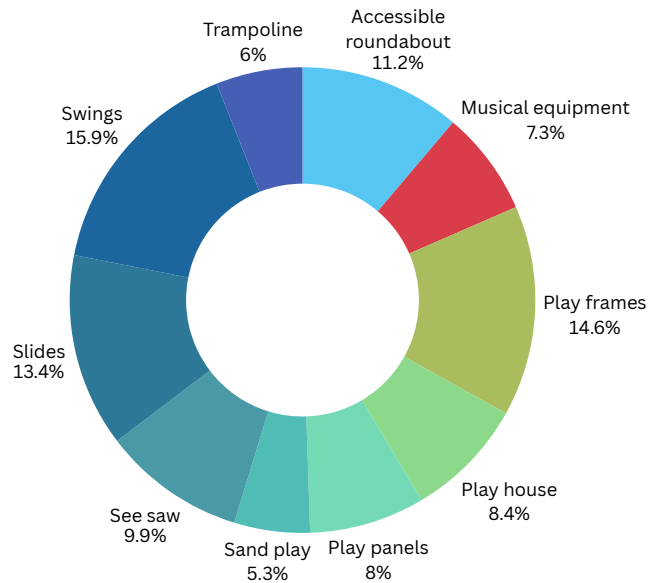
Residents consistently describe Exelby Close Park as being in a state of severe decline, with many stating it is now derelict and “not usable.”

- **Removal or deterioration of almost all play equipment.**
- Broken, **unsafe or rusting equipment**, missing swings, and dismantled rockers.
- Frequent **flooding and waterlogging**, making the space unusable for long periods.
- A lack of secure **fencing and gates**.
- The absence of **bins**, ongoing **litter** and dog fouling, and signs of general neglect.

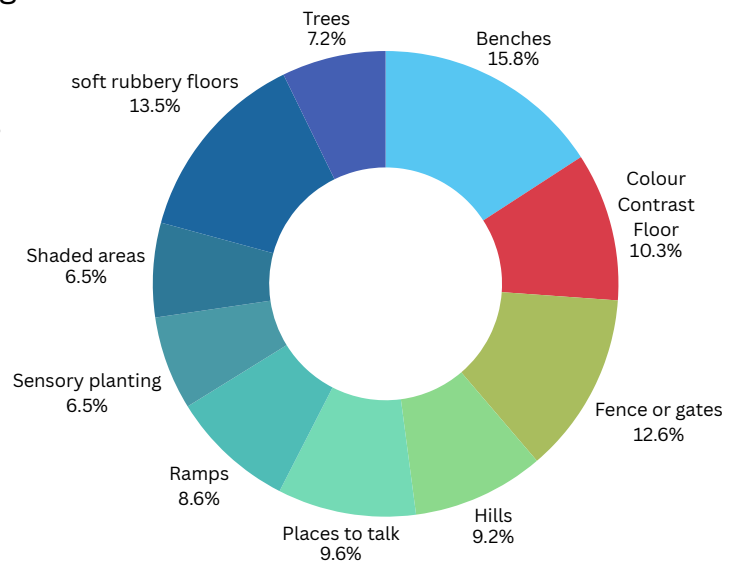
The six factors that most improve people's sense of safety in Exelby Close Park

1. Being away from busy roads, so children aren't near traffic.
2. Open visibility, where the park is not secluded and people can easily see who is around.
3. Overlooking by nearby houses, giving natural surveillance from the community.
4. Well-maintained, non-broken equipment, which makes the park feel cared for rather than abandoned.
5. Secure fencing and gated access, helping prevent dogs entering and keeping young children safe.
6. Other people being present, such as families and neighbours, creating a reassuring sense of activity.

Which equipment would you like to see?



Which features would you like to see?



Barrier to using Exelby Close Park?

Exelby Close Park is currently difficult for residents to use because **most of the play equipment has been removed or is broken**, and the site is **frequently flooded**, leaving the ground muddy and unusable.

The **lack of secure fencing and gates** also makes the space feel unsafe, especially for families with young children. Combined with **poor maintenance** and a general sense of neglect, these issues make the park feel unwelcoming and unsuitable for regular play or community use.

What People Told Us About Using Exelby Close Park?

Feedback from residents shows a strong and consistent message: **Exelby Close Park is highly valued as a local green space, but it is currently not fit for purpose.** Almost all respondents described the park as **derelict, unsafe, or unusable**, with the overwhelming majority reporting that the removal of equipment and ongoing flooding has effectively taken the park away from the community.

Most residents said they either **cannot use the park at all** or only use it for very limited purposes such as walking through the space or letting children run around when the ground is dry enough. Parents, carers, and grandparents repeatedly stated that there is “**nothing there**”, with the last remaining pieces of equipment broken, removed, or unsafe. As a result, families often travel out of the area to other parks, even though Exelby Close Park is geographically convenient and should serve as their local play space.

A strong theme is **loss of a community asset**: older residents recall when the park was well-used by local families, and several expressed disappointment that “a once lovely play park” has deteriorated to the point that children rarely meet each other there anymore.

Despite its current state, residents clearly value the **location**, describing it as central, accessible, close to home, and away from busy roads. Many commented that when the park was functional, it provided a safe, sociable space where children could meet friends and families could gather. The openness and visibility of the site are also viewed positively, particularly in relation to safety.

This reinforces that the **park still holds potential**. The community sees it as an important neighbourhood resource that simply requires investment to become usable again.

There is an exceptionally strong consensus that the park needs **significant reinvestment**. Residents expressed hopes for a **well-equipped, safe, and inclusive play space** suitable for a range of ages.

Residents made it clear that the **community wants Exelby Close Park brought back to life**. The park’s deterioration has had a noticeable impact on children, families, and the wider neighbourhood; however, the desire for a renewed, inclusive, and well-maintained play space is unanimous. The feedback paints a picture of a community ready and eager to use the park again, **if it is restored, re-equipped, and made safe**.

Key Insights from what people told us about **equipment** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

- 1 Swings are the top priority**, receiving the highest overall preference score and appearing in almost every response. Residents consistently mentioned that swings had been removed and strongly want them reinstated.
- 2 Climbing and exploring equipment ranks very highly**, including climbing frames and multi-play structures. This reflects residents' desire for active, challenging play options for a range of ages.
- 3 Slides are also a major priority**, scoring near the top of the rankings and repeatedly identified as missing or broken in the current park.
- 4** There is strong support for **accessible and inclusive equipment**, especially an **accessible roundabout** and sensory play panels, showing a clear preference for a park usable by children with different needs.
- 5** Residents also value **traditional social play items** such as **seesaws** and **playhouses**, which support imaginative and cooperative play.
- 6** **Secondary but still important items** include musical play equipment, trampolines, and sand play—features that provide variety and appeal to different age groups and play styles.

Key Insights from what people told us about **features** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

- 1 Comfort and accessibility are top priorities**
The single most-wanted feature is **benches with backs and armrests**, indicating residents want a park where adults, grandparents, and carers can comfortably supervise children and socialise. Accessibility-focused features—such as **ramps to high-up equipment, colour contrast, and soft-rubber surfacing**. Also rank highly, showing strong support for an inclusive, accessible park.
- 2 Safety features matter deeply**
Residents want **fencing and wide gates**, reflecting concerns about dogs entering the park and children's safety near open paths. Soft-rubber surfacing is also viewed as a safety requirement, not just an enhancement.

Residents value spaces for social connection

3 “Places to talk or quiet play” is one of the most consistently requested features. This shows residents want the park to support intergenerational meeting, parenting, and relaxed social use, not just play equipment.

Natural elements are highly valued

4 Features such as **trees for hide-and-seek, sensory planting, shaded areas,** and **hills** for rolling down all rank strongly. This reflects a desire for a park that feels green, playful, and stimulating, not just equipment-based.

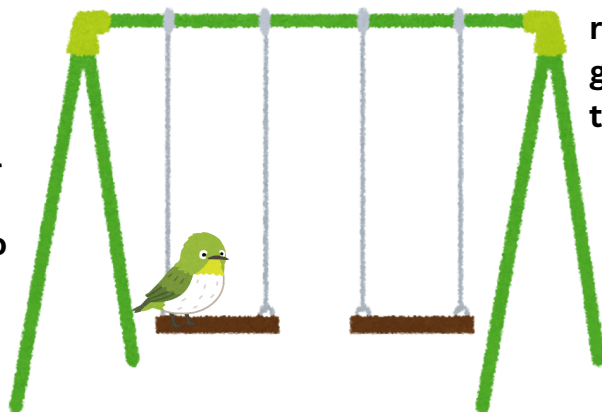
Play variety is expected beyond equipment

5 The high ranking for **hills, trees,** and **quiet spaces** suggests residents want a park that encourages imaginative and free-form play, not only structured equipment. These natural play features complement the equipment wishes, making the park engaging for wider age groups.

Who people go to the park with, Why they go, and What’s good about the park?

Residents told us that they typically go to Exelby Park with their **children, grandchildren, family members, and friends**, using the space as a convenient way for children to meet others and burn off energy. They mainly go to the park for **fresh air, outdoor play, socialising, exercise, and community connection**, particularly because the park is close to home and easy to access. What people say is good about Exelby Close Park is its **location within the estate, being away from busy roads, open and overlooked**, and offering a space that could support safe play and social interaction if improved. Even though the equipment is currently lacking, residents consistently highlight that the park’s **proximity, openness, and community** feel are strong positives

“The park is completely unusable... I am so disappointed that the council has let all the parks in Whitebridge turn into derelict sites.”



“Apart from the slide, all of the equipment has been removed or disabled... the ground gets very muddy in the winter.”

“Wheelchair accessibility in equipment, sensory zones, nature trails”

Facebook comment

How can we improve the play space?

- 1** **Install a full range of new play equipment**, including swings, slides, climbing frames, seesaws, trampolines, play panels and accessible roundabout options, replacing everything that has been removed or is broken.
- 2** **Improve drainage and ground conditions** so the park no longer floods or becomes waterlogged, allowing year-round use.
- 3** **Add secure fencing and self-closing gates** to prevent dogs entering and to keep children safe within the play area.
- 4** **Introduce soft-rubber safety surfacing** under equipment to reduce injuries and improve accessibility.
- 5** **Provide comfortable seating**, especially benches with backs and armrests, so carers and grandparents can supervise children and socialise.
- 6** **Create shaded and quiet areas**, using trees, planting, and designed spaces for rest, calm play, or meeting others.
- 7** **Add natural play features**, such as small hills for rolling and trees for hide-and-seek, enhancing imaginative and free-form play.
- 8** **Improve site maintenance**, including regular inspections, fixing broken items quickly, and ensuring the park feels cared for and safe.
- 9** **Add bins and keep the area clean**, reducing litter and dog waste issues mentioned by residents.
- 10** **Consider inclusive design elements**, such as ramps, colour contrast, and sensory planting, to make the park accessible for all children.

Summary:

Residents clearly value Exelby Park as a local green space, but they report that it has fallen into a state of significant disrepair. The park is described as **derelict, unsafe, and largely unusable**, with most equipment removed, broken, or dangerous. Flooding and poor maintenance further limit use, leaving families travelling outside the area for play opportunities. Despite this, residents emphasise that the park's **central location, openness, and distance from busy roads** make it an ideal space for children to play and for the community to meet, provided it is improved.

Across responses, there is strong consensus that Exelby Park needs **major reinvestment**. Residents want a **well-equipped, safe, and inclusive play space** that offers swings, slides, climbing frames, accessible equipment, and features such as benches, shade, natural play elements, and secure fencing. They also want better drainage and routine maintenance to ensure the park is cared for. The consultation shows a community that is **ready and eager to use the park again**, but only if it is restored, re-equipped, and made safe for children and families.

Nuns Moor Park

Introduction: Nuns Moor Park is located in the west of the city and is part of the Arthurs Hill Ward.

We received 34 online survey's about Nuns Moor Park

Issues:

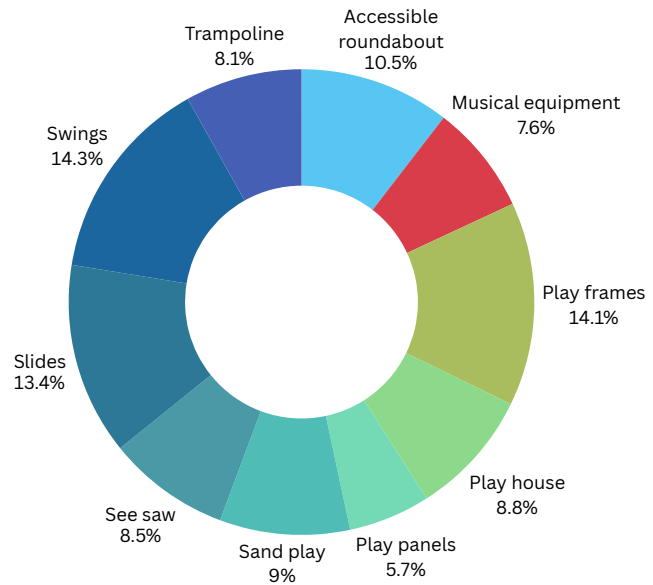
Here are the top 5 issues residents told you about Nuns Moor Park

- Litter and rubbish (including bins not emptied, scattered food, general mess).
- Broken or limited play equipment (swings broken, outdated kit, not enough for toddlers/older children).
- Rats and vermin (frequent mentions of rats, food attracting them).
- Antisocial behaviour (teenagers, shouting, bullying, drug use, fireworks).
- Poor lighting / feeling unsafe at night (dark areas, lack of lighting, secluded spaces).

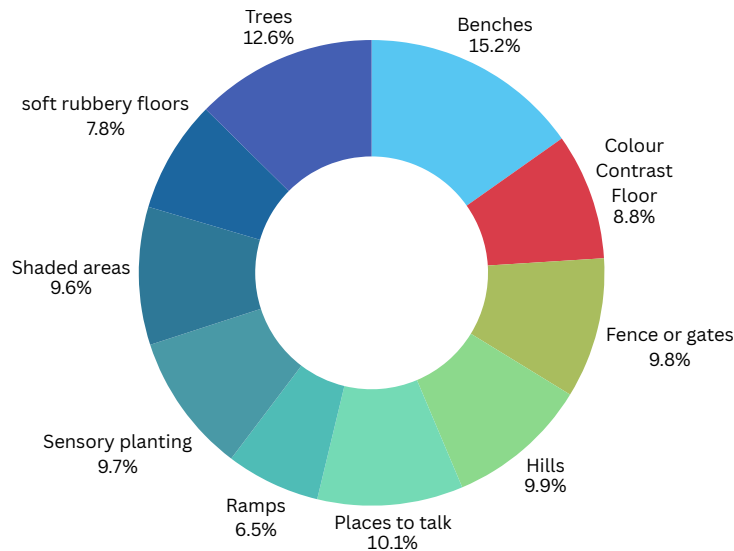
The six factors that most improve people's sense of safety in Nuns Moor Park.

1. Busy, well-used spaces and community presence.
2. Enclosed, fenced play areas that keep dogs out.
3. Clear sightlines and open views.
4. Better lighting in key areas.
5. Separation of areas for different age groups.
6. Clean, well-maintained environment.

Which equipment would you like to see?



Which features would you like to see?



Barriers to using Nuns Moor Park?

Residents say they are most put off using Nuns Moor Park by broken and limited play equipment, litter and rats, and antisocial behaviour such as shouting, drug use, and intimidating groups of young people. They also describe poor lighting and secluded areas as making the park feel unsafe, especially in the evenings, and note that overcrowding, dogs entering play areas, and a lack of separation between age groups can make visits stressful for families.

What people told us about using Nuns Moor Park

Residents described Nuns Moor Park as an important local space that offers greenery, room to play, and places to meet friends and family. Many appreciate its accessibility, mature trees, open areas, and the role of nearby community spaces like the Bike Garden in creating a welcoming atmosphere.

However, people also highlighted several challenges that affect their enjoyment of the park. A key concern was the poor condition and limited variety of play equipment, with many noting broken swings, outdated structures, and a lack of suitable apparatus for both toddlers and older children. Visitors also raised worries about litter, rubbish and the growing rat population, describing the park as sometimes feeling uncared-for. Alongside this, antisocial behaviour, such as groups of teenagers being intimidating, shouting, disruptive behaviour, drug use, and fireworks, makes some families reluctant to visit, especially during quieter times. Safety concerns were amplified by poor lighting and secluded areas, which make the park feel less safe in the evenings or winter months. Some also noted overcrowding during peak times, dogs entering children's areas, and limited separation between age groups, which can reduce comfort and confidence for families. Together, these issues shape how people experience the park and influence how often and when they choose to visit.

Key Insights from what people told us about **equipment** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

1 Traditional equipment is still essential, with swings, slides, and climbing frames ranking highest.

Sensory and accessible items also ranked surprisingly high, indicating strong demand for play that is:

- #### **2**
- Inclusive
 - Calming
 - Safe for a wide range of abilities
 - Supportive of social, imaginative, and developmental play

3 Residents are seeking a balanced play environment, not just big, physical structures.

Key Insights from what people told us about **features** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

Comfort and social connection are top priorities

The most requested feature, benches with backs and armrests, shows people want spaces to sit, supervise children, rest, and socialise. Quiet social spaces ranked extremely high, indicating demand for:

1

- chatting areas
- picnic spots
- locations for intergenerational use
- places to rest for older adults, disabled adults, and caregivers

This demonstrates that residents see the park as a community social space, not just a playground.

Natural, imaginative, low-cost play spaces matter to families

Features like:

2

- Trees for hide & seek
- Hills for rolling down
- Sensory planting

Accessibility features are strongly represented but currently lacking

High-ranking features include:

3

- Fencing or wide gates
- Colour contrast
- Soft rubber flooring
- Ramps to high-up equipment
- Shaded areas for heat / sensory regulation

Safety is a constant, background concern

Features supporting safety, such as fencing and soft surfacing, appear prominently. These help address ongoing issues mentioned throughout the survey:

4

- unwanted adults in play areas
- dogs entering playground space
- trips/falls because of uneven or hard ground

Who people go to the park with, Why they go, and What's good about the park?

Residents typically visit Nuns Moor Park with their children, and many also go with friends, while a smaller number visit alone, with grandchildren, or with other family members. They mainly go to the park so their children can play, get fresh air and exercise, and because the park is close to home and easy to reach as part of everyday routines. People also use the park to meet friends and enjoy time outdoors, appreciating the trees, nature and the opportunity for imaginative play. What residents say is good about the park includes its convenient location, its large open green spaces, the enclosed feel of the play area which helps younger children stay safe, the presence of swings and climbing equipment, and the sense of greenery and openness that makes it a pleasant place to spend time.

How can we improve the play space?

1 Improve the quality and range of play equipment

- Replace or repair broken equipment, including swings and climbing structures, which residents frequently report as damaged.
- Provide more age-appropriate play options, especially for toddlers who currently struggle with limited suitable equipment.
- Add more challenging play items for older children and teenagers, such as larger slides, more complex climbing frames, and monkey bars.
- Expand the overall range of equipment so children do not become bored quickly.
- Consider separate zones for toddlers and older children to reduce conflict and improve safety.

2 Enhance safety and accessibility

- Address widespread concerns about antisocial behaviour, groups of teenagers, and intimidating individuals near play areas.
- Improve lighting, as many residents note the park feels unsafe and poorly lit, particularly in the evenings.
- Add clearer boundaries and ensure the playground remains properly fenced with wide, accessible gates.
- Install clear rules around dog behaviour and provide better separation of dog areas from play areas.
- Increase inclusion by adding ramps, contrast colours, and accessible/sensory play features.

Improve cleanliness and maintenance

Increase bin numbers and ensure more frequent emptying, particularly in summer, to address litter complaints.

3

Implement stronger rat-control measures, as residents repeatedly mention seeing rats and food waste.

Replace the mud-heavy bark surface, which becomes unusable in wet weather, with soft-rubber surfacing.

Ensure broken glass and drug-related litter are removed promptly.

Increase comfort and social spaces

4

- Add more benches with backs and armrests, which were one of the most frequently requested features.
- Provide shaded seating and quiet spaces for socialising or resting.
- Improve picnic areas to better support families and community use of the space.

Enhance natural features and sensory value

5

- Improve and increase sensory planting and green landscaping around the play area.
- Add small hills and natural play features, which residents enjoy for imaginative and physical play.
- Plant more trees for shade, play, and biodiversity.

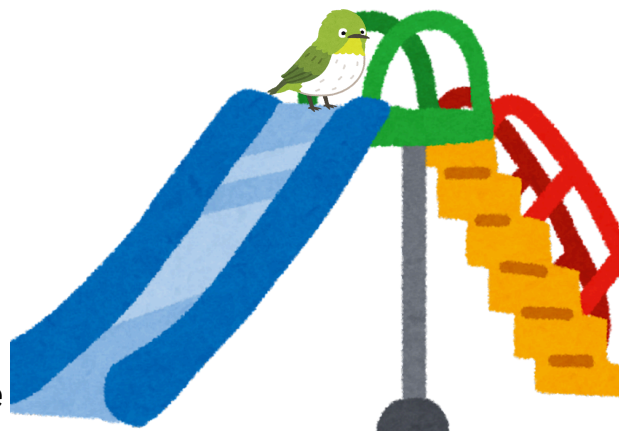
Improve park infrastructure and amenities

6

- Explore options to expand the park café or strengthen the role of the Bike Garden as a community hub.
- Provide clearer signage about acceptable behaviours, BBQ rules, dog control, and park etiquette.
- Improve pathways and general accessibility for pushchairs and those with mobility needs.

“Nuns moor needs a skatepark and waterpark” - Facebook comment

“It is enclosed so free from adults and dogs.”



“Get my children outdoors, imaginative role play, fresh air, fitness, exercise... Closest park.”

Summary:

Residents value Nuns Moor Park as a well-used local green space with open views, mature trees, and an enclosed play area that keeps children safe from dogs and provides room to meet friends, exercise, and enjoy nature. However, they also highlighted several issues that limit how often and how comfortably they use the park. The most common concerns were litter, rubbish, and a growing rat problem, alongside broken or limited play equipment that fails to meet the needs of both toddlers and older children. Many described feeling unsafe due to antisocial behaviour, such as intimidating groups, shouting, drug use, and fireworks, an issue made worse by poor lighting and secluded areas. Overcrowding at busy times, dogs entering the play area, and the lack of clear separation between different age groups were also frequently mentioned barriers. Together, these concerns show that while Nuns Moor Park is highly valued, residents want a cleaner, safer, more inclusive space with improved play facilities and better overall maintenance.

Swan Recreation

To summarise

Introduction: Swan Rec is in the east of the city and is part of the Walkergate ward.

We received 2 online survey's about Swan Recreation

Participants told us

Residents who use Swan Rec visit the park either alone or with children, depending on the purpose of their visit. One participant mainly goes by themselves and meets up with friends, while the other attends with their children, football team, or local community group. This reflects that Swan Rec supports both individual wellbeing activities and family- or community-based visits.

People visit Swan Rec for recreation, social connection, and to support children's activities. One resident uses the park to meet friends and occasionally play football as a way to manage mental health and clear their mind, while the other visits primarily to entertain their children during football matches and make use of the accessible open space for sport. The park is valued for being a practical, flexible space where both adults and children can be active.

Participants described Swan Rec as a helpful and familiar local space that provides good walking routes, open areas for relaxation, and a place to meet others. One resident appreciates it as a quiet point to clear their head, while the other values the close proximity of the football club facilities, which makes the space more convenient for families attending matches.

Residents feel Swan Rec would benefit from improved facilities and more features to support activity. One participant suggested adding more equipment and sports activities to make the park more engaging and active, while the other highlighted the need for additional seating around the play park for parents and carers. These improvements would help make the park more comfortable and better suited to community use.

Both participants identified safety and environmental issues that discourage use of the park. One resident reported concerns about antisocial behaviour, vandalism, and unsafe areas, while the other said the park feels unsafe when dark due to a lack of lighting. These issues reduce confidence in using the park, particularly outside busy times or organised football activities.

Residents described the park as having occasional crime-related issues, antisocial behaviour, and limited visibility at night. One participant noted that CCTV from the football club helps improve safety, but only during periods when the club is active. Without lighting or regular activity, the park feels unsafe during darker hours.

One participant highlighted accessibility needs, explaining that poor balance means they prefer surfaces like woodchips or sand. This suggests that surfacing choices will be important for making Swan Rec more inclusive for users with mobility challenges.

St Lawrence Road

Introduction: St Lawrence Road Park is a small neighbourhood park located in Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne, situated just off Walker Road and is part of the Byker ward.

We received 21 online survey's about St Lawrence Road Park

Issues:

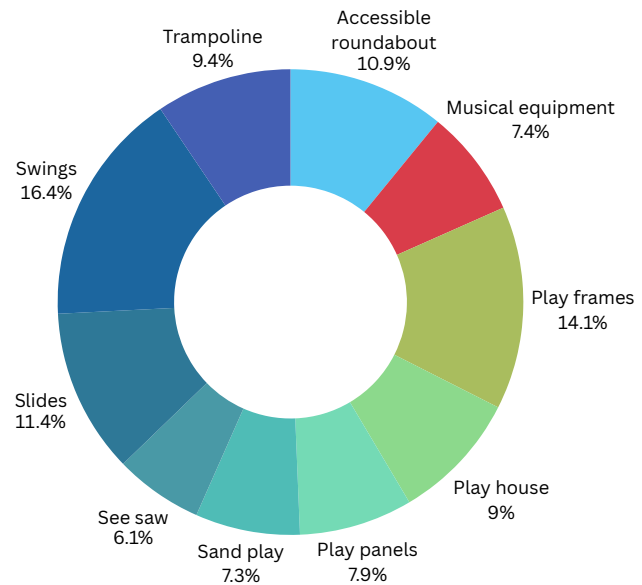
Residents consistently describe St Lawrence Road Park

- Only one slide and almost no usable play equipment.
- Frequent litter, broken glass, and drug-related waste.
- High levels of antisocial behaviour.
- Very poor lighting.
- Problems with uncontrolled dogs.
- General neglect.

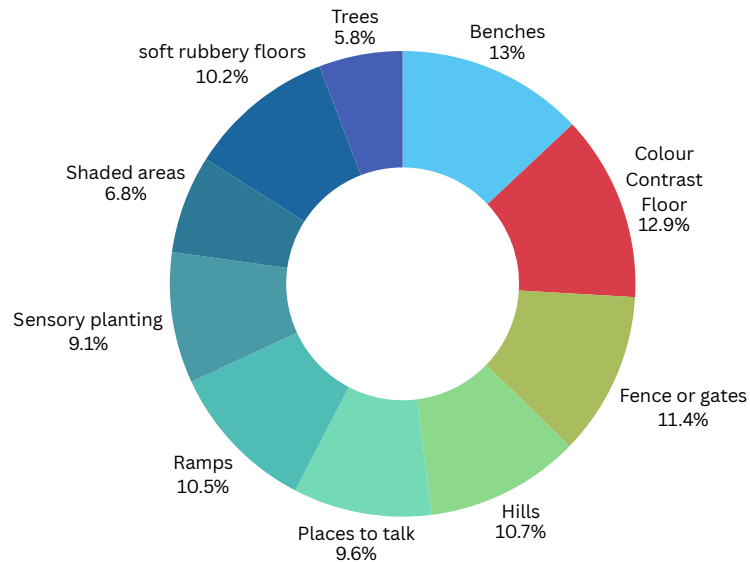
The six factors that most improve people's sense of safety in St Lawrence Road Park

1. Effective, reliable lighting throughout the park.
2. Removal of broken glass, drug waste, and regular litter-cleaning.
3. Addressing antisocial behaviour (including youth disorder, drinking, drugs, and fireworks).
4. Better separation and control of dogs.
5. Replacing or repairing vandalised and unsafe play equipment.
6. Cutting back overgrown bushes and improving sightlines.

Which equipment would you like to see?



Which features would you like to see?



Barrier to using St Lawrence Road Park?

Residents say they are put off using St Lawrence Road Park because the play equipment is unsafe or broken, the area is often littered with glass and drug-related waste, and there is frequent antisocial behaviour such as groups gathering, drinking, or using fireworks. The park also feels unsafe due to poor lighting, overgrown bushes, and uncontrolled dogs, all of which contribute to a sense that the space is neglected and not suitable for children or families.

What people told us about using St Lawrence Road Park

Residents described St Lawrence Road Park as a well-located green space that many pass through or visit because it is close to home, but they also said it currently offers very little for children or families to enjoy. Most highlighted that the park has almost no usable play equipment, with only a single slide remaining, which is often unsafe or surrounded by hazards like broken glass, litter, and drug-related waste. People also reported frequent antisocial behaviour, including gatherings, drinking, drug use, fireworks, and vandalism, which makes the park feel unsafe, especially in the evenings, when there is no lighting and visibility is poor due to overgrown bushes. Many mentioned problems with uncontrolled or intimidating dogs, and a general sense that the park is neglected and not maintained well. Despite this, some still value the open space, the football field, and the community's willingness to care for the area, showing that the park has potential if properly invested in.

Key Insights from what people told us about **equipment** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

Strong demand for traditional, core play equipment

1

Across the responses, residents consistently prioritised swings, climbing frames, and slides as the most important pieces of equipment for their park. These items appeared in almost every list and ranked highest in the weighted scoring. This reflects a desire for reliable, familiar play options that appeal to a wide range of ages.

A need for a broader, more varied set of activities

2

People repeatedly said that the park currently has very little to play on, with many stating there is “only a slide.” As a result, residents asked for a wider mix of equipment, such as trampolines, playhouses, sand play, and seesaws, to provide more opportunities for imaginative, physical, and sensory play. This suggests that families want a park that can hold children's interest for longer and support repeat visits.

High interest in inclusive and accessible equipment

3

Features such as accessible roundabouts, play panels, and sensory play elements (light, touch, sound) were frequently included in ranked lists. This reflects a desire for equipment that is suitable for children with different ages, abilities, and sensory needs, and supports inclusive family use.

4 Residents want equipment that feels safe, modern, and fit for purpose
Many comments referenced the dangerous condition of the current slide, vandalism, broken glass, and the removal of other equipment like the zip wire. This signals a need not just for more equipment but for robust, durable, well-maintained structures designed to withstand heavy use and reduce safety risks.

5 Equipment for older children and teenagers is missing but needed
Several responses highlighted that older children and teens currently have nothing appropriate to use, which can lead to boredom or gathering around younger children's play equipment. Residents asked for larger, more challenging structures, and some suggested that a dedicated youth zone could help reduce antisocial behaviour around the play area.

6 A desire for imaginative and activity-based play
Requests for items like climbing frames, interactive panels, and musical elements show that residents want equipment that encourages creative, physical, and social play, rather than simple or single-use structures. This aligns with families wanting richer play experiences that support children's development.

Key Insights from what people told us about **features** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

1 People want comfortable places to sit and rest
The most consistently requested feature was benches with backs and armrests, reflecting a need for comfortable spaces where parents, carers, older residents, and community members can sit, supervise children, or simply relax.

2 Accessibility and inclusive design are high priorities
Residents frequently selected features such as colour contrast, ramps to high-up equipment, and soft-rubber surfacing, showing a strong desire for a park that is accessible for disabled children, those with mobility needs, and younger toddlers.

3 Safety features are essential
Requests for fencing or wide gates appeared often, highlighting concerns about dogs, traffic, and antisocial behaviour. Residents want clearer boundaries and improved safety for children when playing.

- 4 Natural play and greenery matter to families**
Features like hills for rolling down, trees for hide and seek, and sensory planting ranked highly. This shows a strong appetite for natural, imaginative spaces that encourage exploration and outdoor learning.
- 5 Quiet and social spaces are important**
People asked for places to talk or quiet play areas, showing a desire for calm spaces where adults can chat and children can engage in low-stimulus play away from busy activity zones.
- 6 Shaded areas are needed for comfort and year-round use**
Requests for shaded areas suggest residents want protection from sun and weather, making the park more usable for longer periods across the year.

Who people go to the park with, Why they go, and What’s good about the park?

Residents told us they usually visit St Lawrence Road Park with their children, family members, or friends, while some also go alone when passing through or walking their dog. They mainly go to the park because it is close to home, provides a green space to walk, run, play, or exercise, and gives children a chance to burn energy outdoors. However, when describing what is good about the park, most people said that its location is its strongest asset, being nearby and convenient, along with the open green space and the football field, which some families still find useful. Many also mentioned that the park has potential and benefits from a sense of community where local residents try to look after the space, even though there is currently very little play equipment available.

“I’ve lived here 16 years and it’s only ever been a slide for children.”

“Often needles/ smashed glass and burnt remnants of fires at the only piece of play equipment- the slide.”

“It has no defined boundaries, gates, or fences – there is no lighting – teenagers take advantage of this by gathering in the park during dark times and sometimes lighting fires for no reason.”



How can we improve the play space?

1

Upgrade and expand the play equipment

- Replace the current unsafe slide and install a full range of modern, safe play equipment (e.g., swings, climbing frames, trampolines, play panels, sand play).
- Reintroduce missing items such as the zip wire, which residents said had been removed or damaged.
- Ensure equipment is robust, well-maintained, and regularly inspected to prevent vandalism and hazard build-up.

2

Improve safety and visibility

- Install proper lighting, especially for winter afternoons and evenings, as the park is currently described as “very dark” and unsafe.
- Cut back overgrown bushes and remove hidden areas to create clear sightlines throughout the park.
- Consider installing CCTV or security measures, as multiple residents raised concerns about crime and antisocial behaviour.

3

Reduce antisocial behaviour

- Address ongoing issues with fireworks, drinking, drug use, vandalism, and large groups gathering after dark.
- Create positive spaces for older children/teens, which residents believe could reduce misuse of the children’s play area.

4

Keep the park clean and well-maintained

Implement regular litter-picking and hazard removal, especially broken glass, drug litter, and dog mess.

Improve and tidy the ground, clean paths, clear moss, cut back vegetation, and maintain planting beds.

5

Introduce safer boundaries and dog control

- Add fencing or wide gates to separate dogs from play areas and improve child safety.
- Provide dog-friendly areas or clearer rules to prevent intimidating loose dogs from entering the children’s zone.

6

Add more seating, comfort features, and accessible design

- Install benches with backs and armrests, which were one of the most requested features.
- Add shaded areas, quiet spaces, and sensory planting to make the park more welcoming.
- Include accessible routes, ramps, and colour-contrast features to support children and adults with disabilities.

Summary:

Residents told us that while St Lawrence Road Park is well-located and valued as a local green space, it is currently failing to meet the needs of the community. People consistently described a park that has been neglected for many years, offering almost no usable play equipment beyond a single unsafe slide. Concerns about safety are widespread, with repeated reports of broken glass, drug litter, vandalism, fires, and antisocial behaviour making the space feel unwelcoming—especially in the evenings due to very poor lighting and overgrown areas. The lack of boundaries allows uncontrolled dogs to enter the play area, adding to parents' worries. Despite these challenges, residents also recognised the park's potential and expressed clear preferences for improvements, including better lighting, more varied and inclusive play equipment, safer surfaces, comfortable seating, fencing, and natural features such as sensory planting and quiet spaces. This feedback shows a strong desire for the park to become a cleaner, safer, and more accessible place where children, families, and the wider community can spend time with confidence.

The Tute 'Westerhope Institution'

Introduction: The Tute is located in the outer west of the city and is part of the Chapel Ward.

We received 18 online survey's about The Tute

Issues:

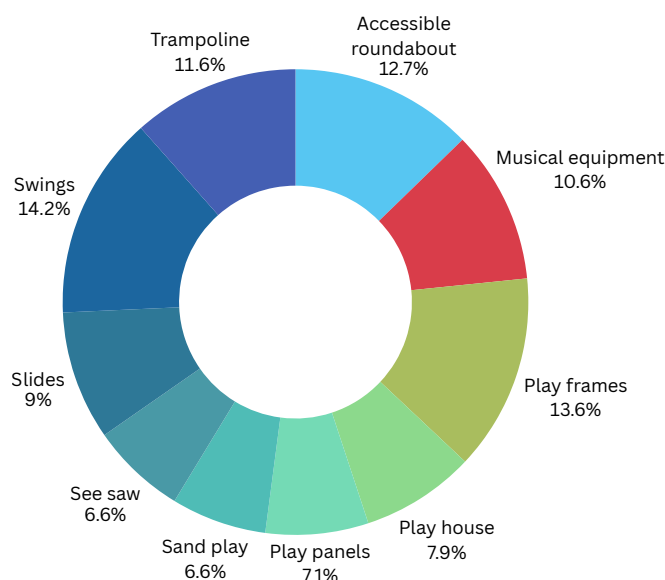
Residents consistently describe issues at the The Tute as;

- The park is too small with very limited equipment.
- Equipment is aimed mainly at toddlers and not suitable for older children.
- Broken or unsafe equipment (especially swings).
- Teenagers using the park as a hangout.
- Litter, broken glass, and poor maintenance.
- Poor lighting and secluded areas.

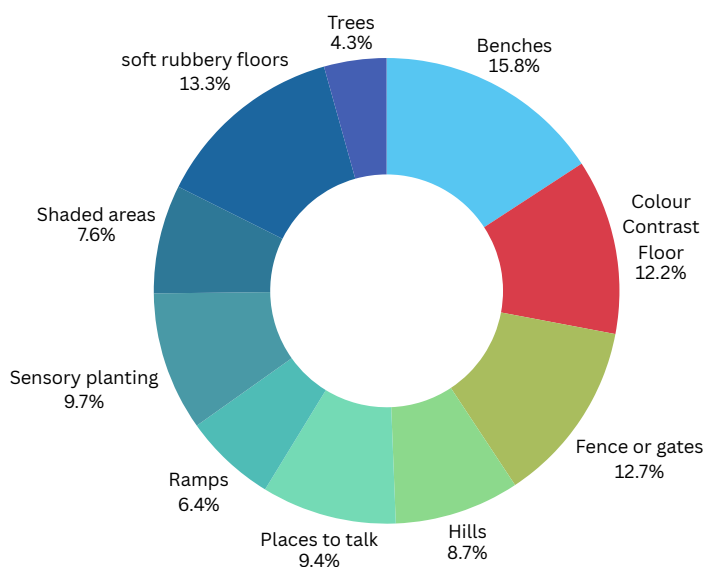
The six factors that most improve people's sense of safety at Tute

1. Better lighting throughout the park.
2. Repairing or replacing broken equipment.
3. Reducing antisocial behaviour from teenagers gathering.
4. Improved maintenance: removing litter and broken glass.
5. Stronger fencing and secure gates.
6. More supervision indicators (CCTV, presence of other families).

Which equipment would you like to see?



Which features would you like to see?



Barriers to using The Tute Park?

Residents told us that the main barriers to using The Tute Park are the limited and toddler-focused play equipment, which leaves older children bored, and broken or unsafe items such as damaged swings. People also reported teenagers hanging around, which can feel intimidating, as well as litter and broken glass that make the space seem poorly maintained. In addition, poor lighting and secluded spots reduce feelings of safety, and insecure gates mean dogs can enter the play area, discouraging families from staying.

What people told us about using The Tute

Residents described The Tute Park as a convenient and well-located neighbourhood space, valued because it is close to home, within walking distance, and gated, which helps parents feel their children are safe while playing. Families often visit with their children, friends, and extended family, using the park for play, exercise, socialising, and outdoor time after school. They appreciate that the park is cleaner than some alternatives, has decent access, and provides a space for young children to run around and enjoy being outdoors. However, many said the park is too small, with equipment that is mostly suited to toddlers, meaning older children quickly become bored. Despite this, the park still plays an important role for local families as an easily accessible, enclosed, and friendly community space.

Key Insights from what people told us about **equipment** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

- 1 Swings are the number-one priority**
Swings received the highest weighted score of all equipment, appearing in every resident's list and ranking first overall. This reflects a strong desire for classic, reliable play equipment that appeals to a wide age range.
- 2 A strong need for equipment suitable for older children**
Residents repeatedly said current provision is aimed at toddlers. High rankings for climbing frames, trampolines, and accessible roundabouts show a desire for more physically challenging equipment for older children.
- 3 Accessible and inclusive play equipment is a priority**
Items such as accessible roundabouts and sensory play panels ranked highly, indicating a community desire for equipment that children of all abilities can use together.
- 4 Sensory and creative play experiences are important**
Musical equipment and sensory play panels scored strongly, showing that families want equipment that stimulates imagination, creativity, and sensory engagement, not just physical activity.
- 5 A wider variety of equipment is needed to hold children's interest**
Residents consistently commented that children "get bored easily" because the current offer is too limited. High scores across many different items (e.g., playhouse, seesaw, sand play) demonstrate a desire for a broader mix to support longer, more enjoyable visits.

Equipment must be safe, robust, and well-maintained

- 6** Concerns about broken swings and damaged fixtures show that families want durable, modern equipment that is safe and properly maintained to encourage regular use.

Key Insights from what people told us about **features** they would like for their neighbourhood play space

- 1 Comfortable seating is a top priority**
Benches with backs and armrests ranked as the number-one feature, showing that families want places to sit, supervise children, and socialise comfortably.
- 2 Safety-focused features rank highly**
Residents strongly prioritised soft rubbery flooring, fencing or wide gates, and colour-contrast surfaces, indicating a desire for safer play areas, better fall protection, and clearer visibility for children with additional needs.
- 3 Sensory and nature-based features are important**
Features such as sensory planting, trees for hide and seek, and hills for rolling down scored strongly, showing that residents value natural, imaginative play environments beyond fixed equipment.
- 4 Quiet and social spaces matter to families**
The request for places to talk or quiet play areas reflects a desire for calmer zones where children can take sensory breaks and adults can relax or chat.
- 5 Shade and weather protection are needed**
Shaded areas were commonly selected, suggesting families want protection from sun and rain so the park can be used more comfortably throughout the year.
- 6 Accessibility is a recurring theme**
Residents highlighted ramps to high-up equipment and colour contrast as important, signalling a strong desire for the park to be inclusive for children with disabilities and mobility challenges.

“It is far too small with limited equipment for school age children.”



“Not maintained, dirty, litter and vandalism.”

Who people go to the park with, Why they go, and What's good about the park?

Residents told us they usually visit The Tute Park with their children, family members, and friends, often bringing younger children to play or socialise after school, while some also go alone or with grandparents. They mainly go because the park is local, within easy walking distance, and offers a safe, enclosed space where children can get fresh air, exercise, and time outdoors instead of being on devices. People described the park as a convenient neighbourhood spot with gated access, generally friendly visitors, and a layout that allows parents to supervise children easily. Some also appreciated its proximity to school, the small variety of equipment for toddlers, and the presence of a bench or open space for play. However, they consistently noted that the park's value is mostly due to its location, with limited equipment and size restricting how long families stay.

How can we improve the play space?

Upgrade and broaden the play offer

1

- Add high-priority equipment residents ranked top: swings, climbing frames, accessible roundabout, trampoline, and musical/sensory play to keep children of different ages engaged for longer.
- Balance for ages: current kit is seen as “for toddlers”; introduce bigger slide, more challenging climbing, and options that appeal to older children to reduce boredom and short stays.
- Fix and replace broken items (e.g., swings) and commit to routine safety inspections so the park feels cared-for and safe.

Improve safety, lighting and visibility

2

- Tackle poor lighting and secluded/hidden spots with new columns and pruning to open sightlines, parents specifically link lighting and visibility to feeling safe.
- Where appropriate, maintain/extend CCTV coverage and encourage a steady “eyes-on-the-park” presence; residents say cameras and other families being present helps.
- Manage teen hang-outs by offering better age-suitable activities and maintaining a visible, well-used space to deter anti-social behaviour.

Make the surfacing, boundaries and access safer and more inclusive

3

- Install soft rubber surfacing to address muddy, slippery ground and reduce fall injuries, this was repeatedly requested.
- Ensure secure fencing and gates (including a gate that locks) to prevent dogs entering the play area; residents connect enclosure with safety.
- Add colour-contrast wayfinding and ramps to high-up equipment so disabled children, toddlers and carers can use the park more confidently.

4**Provide for older children/teens**

Introduce challenge elements (higher climbing, more dynamic kit) and consider youth-appropriate features (e.g., small skate/BMX elements) to reduce displacement of teens into toddler zones and cut friction between age groups.

5**Improve comfort and dwell-time**

- Add more benches with backs and armrests (top-ranked feature) and shaded seating so parents/carers can supervise comfortably and stay longer; include quiet/low-stimulus nooks for decompression.
- Expand picnic-friendly areas so families can meet after school and at weekends without leaving quickly due to limited provision.

6**Strengthen cleanliness and routine maintenance**

- Increase bin provision and litter picks, with quick response to broken glass and any sharp/hazardous waste; visible care improves perceived safety.
- Refresh planting and paths; add sensory planting and seasonal colour to boost pride of place and reduce the “neglected” look residents note.

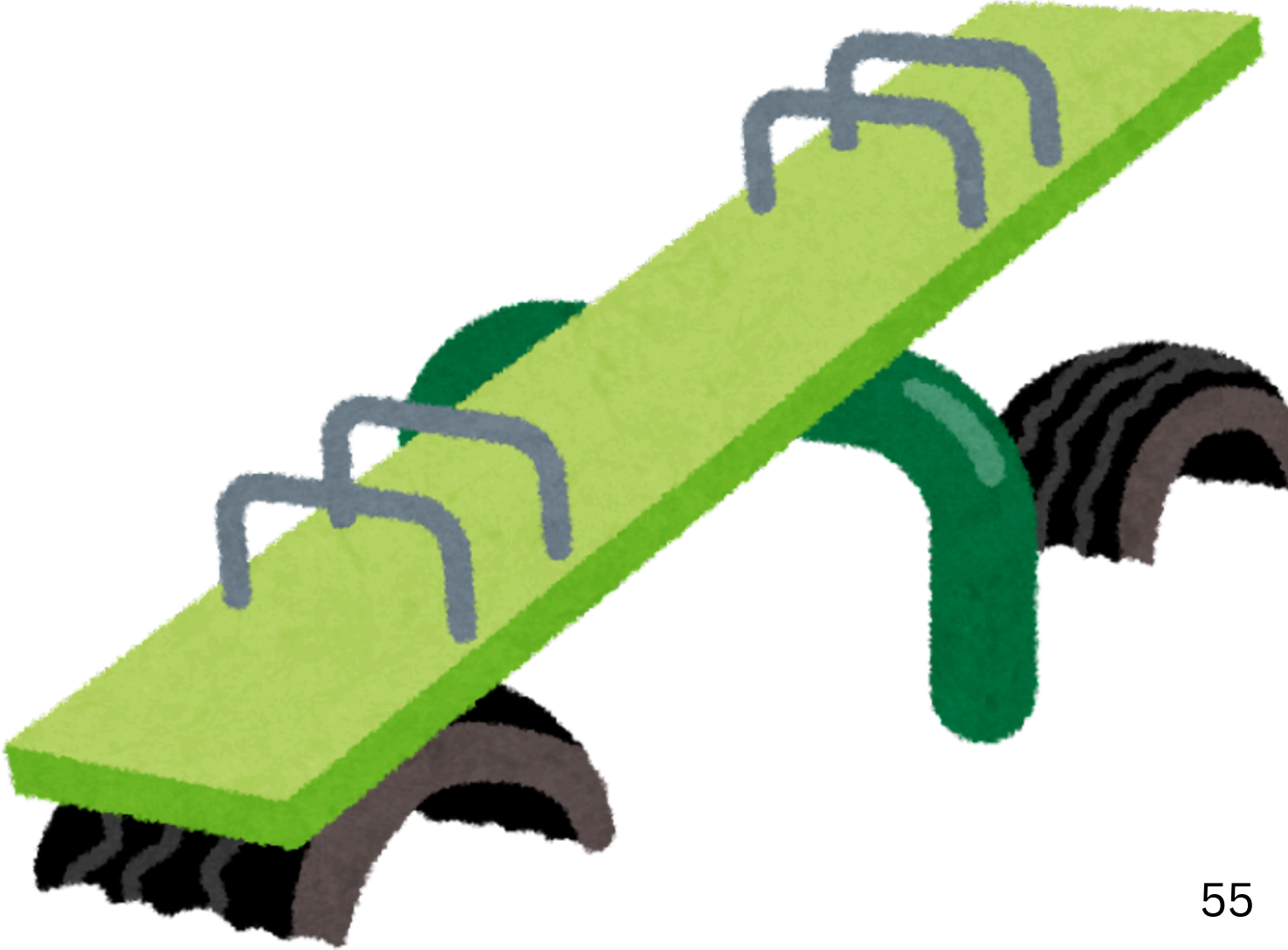
7**Helpful facilities (where feasible)**

- Explore toilets (or signed access to nearby facilities) and keep reinforcing that the park is gated, near housing and school, with easy access and parking, reasons people already choose it.

Summary:

Residents told us that The Tute Park is a valued local space because it is close to home, enclosed, and easy for families to access, but they also highlighted several issues that limit how well it works for the community. The park is considered too small and currently offers very limited, toddler-focused play equipment, leaving older children with little to do. People also raised concerns about broken or unsafe equipment, litter and broken glass, and poor maintenance, all of which contribute to feelings of neglect. Safety worries were common, particularly around poor lighting, secluded areas, and groups of teenagers gathering. When asked what would make the park better, residents expressed a clear desire for more varied and inclusive play equipment, improved lighting, secure gates, safer surfacing, and more comfortable seating. Across all feedback, it is evident that while The Tute has strong potential as a neighbourhood asset, residents want it to be safer, cleaner, and equipped for children of all ages so it can be used more confidently and enjoyed for longer.

Conclusion, Recommendations and Next Steps



Conclusion

The consultation findings present a consistent and compelling picture of how important neighbourhood play spaces are to families across Newcastle. Residents repeatedly described parks as essential places for children to play, socialise, and enjoy fresh air, as well as spaces that support community wellbeing and connection. Across all seven sites, the message from communities is clear: people value their local parks, but years of limited investment, ageing equipment, safety concerns, and inconsistent maintenance have left many spaces unable to meet the needs of children and families.

While each park has its own character and specific challenges, the themes shared across neighbourhoods are strikingly aligned. Families want safe, clean, welcoming parks that offer a broad mix of play opportunities for children of all ages and abilities. Traditional play equipment, particularly swings, slides and climbing frames, remains essential, yet residents also strongly prioritise inclusive, sensory and accessible features that enable disabled children and those with additional needs to play alongside their peers. Natural elements such as trees, planting, and small hills are highly valued, reinforcing a desire for parks that feel green, imaginative, and rooted in their surroundings rather than purely equipment-based.

Safety is the most persistent concern across all sites, especially where poor lighting, antisocial behaviour, dog control issues, broken equipment, and litter, including hazardous waste, reduce confidence and deter families. Residents emphasised that clean, well-maintained parks with good sightlines, secure boundaries and clear activity areas feel safer, more welcoming, and better used. They also highlighted the importance of comfortable spaces for adults, benches with backs, shaded areas, and places to rest or talk, reflecting the role parks play in community life beyond children's play alone.

This consultation demonstrates a strong sense of community pride and a shared belief in the potential of local parks. Residents want investment that creates inclusive, vibrant, and well-cared-for spaces that reflect local needs and support long-term use. Taken together, the findings provide a clear and actionable foundation for future design, planning and investment, ensuring the city's play spaces become safer, greener, and more enjoyable for everyone.

“I would like to see exercise equipment in parks it will do the kids and adult good” - Facebook comment



“More equipment and more seats” Participant from Denton Burn Library

“This play park would be much better if it was properly invested in and consistently looked after...”
- Participant commenting on St Lawrence Road Park

Recommendations

1

Improve and modernise play equipment

- Install a full range of core play items
- Provide age-appropriate options
- Include inclusive and sensory equipment
- Replace broken, missing or unsafe structures as a priority

2

Strengthen safety, visibility and design

- Improve lighting throughout parks
- Ensure open sightlines
- Add or upgrade secure fencing and gates
- Design out antisocial behaviour

3

Enhance cleanliness and routine maintenance

- Increase frequency of litter removal
- Improve drainage and ground conditions
- Maintain equipment and surfaces proactively and quickly
- Increase bins and dog-waste provision

4

Create inclusive, accessible park environments

- Provide accessible surfacing, ramps and wide pathways
- Use colour-contrast features and sensory planting to support neurodivergent and visually impaired children
- Ensure equipment and layouts accommodate a wide range of mobility, sensory and developmental needs.

5

Increase comfort and social connection

- Install more benches with backs and armrests
- Add shaded areas, picnic spaces, quiet zones and places to talk
- Provide sheltered spaces or seating near play zones to encourage longer, more enjoyable visits.

6

Expand natural and sensory features

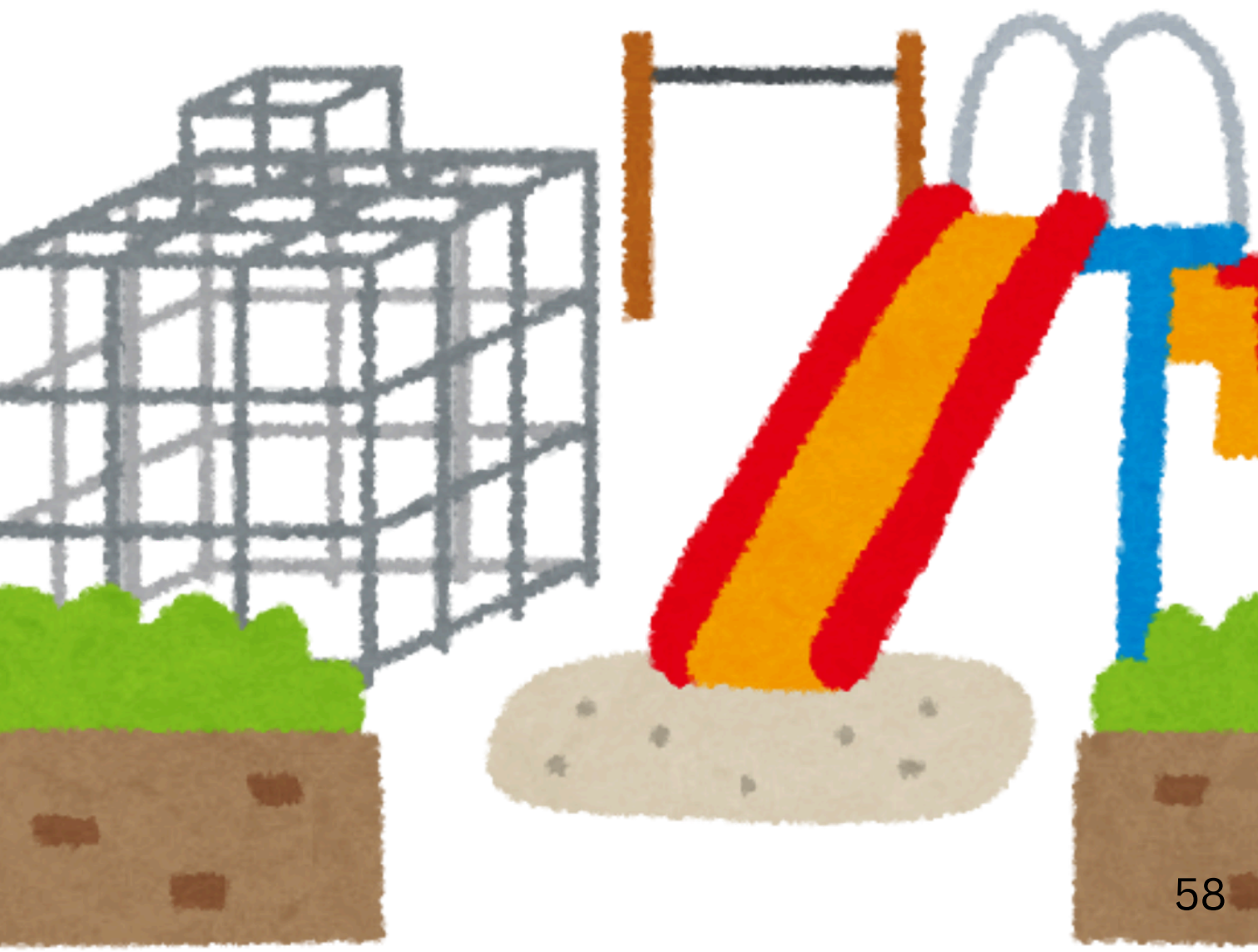
- Plant more trees, sensory shrubs and nature-rich landscaping
- Introduce natural play elements
- Use planting and layout to create calm, imaginative spaces that complement equipment-based play

7

Improve wider park infrastructure and facilities

- Where feasible, add toilets, café/refreshment points or clear signage to nearby facilities
- Improve pathways and access routes
- Consider dedicated zones for older children/teens

Appendix



Questions from the online Survey

- When you go to the park who do you go with? (multi choice)
- Who do you meet at the park? (multi choice)
- Who do you meet at the park?
- What prevents you from going to a play park?
- Which park would you like to tell us about? (multi choice)
- Why do you go to this park?
- What do you like to do at the park? (multiple)
- What is good about this play park?
- What would make this play park better?
- What equipment would you like to see in a park? Please put the equipment in your favourite order
- What features would you like to see in the park? Please put the equipment in your favourite order
- What stops you going to the play park?
- Do you feel safe in the park? (multi choice)
- What makes the park feel safe?
- What makes the park feel unsafe?

Prepared by

Communities Team, Housing and Communities,
Newcastle City Council

Prepared for

Estate & Playground Management, City Operations
Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
Directorate, Newcastle City Council

Author:

Louise Cameron

Reviewers/Approvers:

Vic Powell

**If you would like to discuss this report further or
need it in an alternative format please get in touch**

www.newcastle.gov.uk
communitiesteam@newcastle.gov.uk
0191 277 3598