

# Toft Newton Parish Council

Website: <https://toft-newton.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk>

## Play Policy

### Introduction

Toft Newton Parish Council is one of the first parish councils in the UK to introduce its own play policy.

We are proud of our commitment to play, leisure and informal recreation within our parish.

***The Council is committed to ensuring children aged 0 to 18 have suitable access to a range of play, leisure, sports and wider informal and formal recreational facilities within the parish.***

Toft Newton Parish Council currently provides a play park and a football pitch both of which are located behind the Toft Newton Village Hall in Newtoft.

Through this policy, we commit to maintaining both the play park and the football pitch to a high standard and to ensure that the equipment and facilities provided meet a vast range of developmental abilities and needs.

Play is often described as the work of a child, it is generally broken down into the following categories, as defined in the national occupational standards for Playwork:

**S**ocial

**P**hysical

**I**ntellectual

**C**reative

**E**motional



### The Legal Aspect

Legally, parish councils do not have to provide opportunities for play, here in Lincolnshire some town and parish councils do, while others don't.

Approved: 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2026

At Toft Newton Parish Council we have had a longstanding commitment to maintaining a park with fixed play equipment that is suitable for a range of age and stages of child development.

Although town and parish councils do not have to provide play facilities, children do have a legal right to play, as enshrined in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) - Article 31: Right to Play, which was ratified by the UK government in December 1991.

The previous UK Labour government introduced a National Play Strategy in 2008. The national play strategy aimed to increase the availability of freely chosen, self-directed, accessible play to all children throughout the UK.

## **The Current Situation**

Subsequent budget cuts and periods of austerity led to playgrounds being closed, as a result opportunities for freely chosen, self-directed, accessible play have been reduced both nationally and within Lincolnshire over the last fifteen years or so.

While there has been a decline in public play provision, there has undoubtedly been an increase in private play, leisure and sports facilities, the price, the travel time and distance, the process of booking in advance, and the limited time available per session, means that it is more difficult for children to engage in a whole range of freely chosen, self-directed, accessible play opportunities.

## **Commitment**

Our commitment to children's play, leisure, sports and informal recreation, is grounded in our extraordinary natural environment, utilising our play park, our football pitch, the Village Hall, and the potential that our rural community provides for freely chosen, self-directed, intrinsically motivated play and recreation.

Our play policy will link into West Lindsey District Council's planning framework, the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, and WLDC's priorities for outdoor spaces.

When planning new play equipment, leisure and sports facilities, Toft Newton Parish Council will ensure that equipment is provided that meets the needs of all children in the parish, aged 0 to 18. This includes children with disabilities, both physical and sensory.

We will ensure that each piece of equipment, facility, development or redevelopment promotes play that is Social, Physical, Intellectual, Creative, and Emotional, we will also ensure that accessibility is a top priority.

Between 2025-26 and 2027-28, Toft Newton Parish Council are upgrading the football pitch, with funding from the Football Foundation. This will make the football pitch one of the best grassroots pitches in Lincolnshire, and possibly the best in West Lindsey.

We even have a football team based at our pitch, Newtoft United.

The overarching principle of this play policy is that the parish council will encourage children to play for free in our community, outside in all weathers, in different terrains; we will promote the natural development of children's Social, Physical, Intellectual, Creative, and Emotional skills, which in turn, will contribute to an overall healthy childhood and prepare children well for adulthood.

We will review our play policy annually to ensure that we are in keeping with local policies, national agendas and ensuring that our play facilities meet the needs of our community

Pioneer Playworker Bob Hughes devised a taxonomy of play types; his 16 different types of play are listed as an appendix to this policy.

While we want to make sure as many play types as possible available to children in our community, we have opted to use the **SPICE** play categories as these encompass most of the 16 play types.

Our recently retired Parish Council Clerk, Michael Lewis had previously worked as a Playworker, Youth Worker and as a Playwork Trainer and Assessor. He worked extensively in the local government sector over a period of 16 years at the beginning of his career, his experience included working in after school clubs, holiday playschemes, adventure playgrounds, youth centres and crèches; predominantly with children aged 5 to 14 but he has worked across the 0 to 18 age range.

His experience saw him working with disabled children as well as non-disabled children; the last five years of his children's services career saw him specialising in working with children with significant disabilities, who were mainly on the autistic spectrum, had ADHD or extremely challenging and sometimes violent behaviour. It is his wish that children everywhere are able to access play spaces that are stimulating, safe, but challenging and allow for "*freely chosen self-directed play*".

To ensure our play equipment meets appropriate safety standards we have trained our Playground Warden and an additional member of the community in routine playground safety inspections. Both are now registered on the Playground Inspection Register International until the summer of 2028: this also means that Toft Newton Parish Council can potentially carry out routine playground inspections on behalf of other borough, city, district, town and parish councils or indeed private organisations.

Additionally, annual safety inspections are to be carried out by RoSPA PlaySafe from 2026.

Our play policy commits us to making sure that we provide a range of equipment, facilities and spaces that allow freely chosen self-directed, accessible play. It is also about ensuring accountability through regular safety inspections, frequent upgrades of equipment and resources, as well as ensuring the ongoing maintenance of facilities.

We will use planning for play opportunities, ensuring local children are involved in making decisions about equipment purchases as often as possible.

Attached to this policy is a list of equipment at the play park and the football pitch with a plan for refurbishment, replacement or maintenance as required so that the community can see which pieces of equipment are due to be replaced or refurbished and when.

Essentially, we want Toft Newton to be a community that provides plenty of opportunity for outdoor play, leisure and informal recreation that develops Social, Physical, Intellectual, Creative and Emotional skills in all local children.

## **Future developments:**

### **Monkey Challenge**

This is a 10m long low-level climbing wall, it is designed to promote physical social intellectual creative and emotional development and is suitable for children aged from around three years old. An application has been submitted to Awards For All, if successful, this wooden and moulded plastic structure would be the first new piece of play equipment in several years.

### **Under Five's Equipment**

We are looking to install some new pieces of equipment specifically suitable for children under the age of five (often referred to EYFS equipment), this may include rockers, puzzles and smaller equipment to promote the SPICE play values.

### **Multi-Use Games Area or MUGA**

Toft Newton Parish Council are looking to raise funds to install a Multi-Use Games Area on or close to the old allotment site.

A Multi-Use Games Area is about the size of a tennis court with various markings which indicate different playing areas. there will be metal cage style fencing with built-in football goals at each end as well as basketball hoops are different markings will be for different games such as football, basketball tennis et cetera multi use games area is a significant investment and will be guaranteed for a minimum of 25 years.

These are usually aimed at older children, teenagers and young adults; the inclusion of a MUGA within the parish will show that Toft Newton Parish Council is dedicated to promoting all aspects of play leisure sports and informal recreation on our doorstep.

### **The Big Wood**

Toft Newton Parish Council has the opportunity to raise funds to purchase a piece of woodland on the edge of the village of Newtoft.

This 0.84-acre site is a well-established woodland that, although privately owned, is used and accessed by members of the community on a daily basis.

Bringing the Woodland into the ownership of a parish council would allow a development of a safe area to exercise, walk dogs, appreciate nature and to learn about ecosystems, biodiversity and sustainability.

Bringing the woodland into public ownership would strengthen the communities physical and mental health as well as providing opportunities for freely chosen, self-directed, accessible play.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

In developing a neighbourhood plan once the Government have published their revised guidance, will mean that everything that Toft Newton Parish Council does will link in to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, Lincolnshire Playing Pitch Strategy, National Planning Policy Framework, as well as the soon to be developed Spatial Development Strategies for Greater Lincolnshire and a range of other local and national policies.

Our Play Policy links directly with the current Central Lincolnshire Local Plan through the following policies

- S50 Community Facilities
- S51 Creation of New Open Space, Sports and Leisure Facilities
- S60 Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- S64 Local Green Spaces
- S65 Important Open Spaces

And to a lesser extent policy

- S43 Sustainable Rural Tourism
- S66 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

Our Play Policy also links directly into the current National Planning Policy Framework through the following policies

- 8 Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
- 12 Achieving Well Designed Places
- 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

## **Conclusion**

We believe it is important to safeguard the opportunities for children's play, leisure, sports and informal recreation in the fantastic natural environment within our parish for today's children and families as well as for future generations of the parish.

## Further information:

Article 31: Right to Play <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/article-31-right-play/>

Play Types [https://play.wales/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/play-types\\_2023.pdf](https://play.wales/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/play-types_2023.pdf)

The First Claim - A Framework For Playwork Quality Assessment <https://play.wales/the-first-claim-a-framework-for-playwork-quality-assessment/>

Local Government Association: Our Vision for children, young people and families 2024  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/our-vision-children-young-people-and-families>

The UK Government Play Strategy 2008  
<https://lx.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/The%20Play%20Strategy.pdf>

Play England It All Starts With Play 10 Year Strategy 2025  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609a5802ba3f13305c43d352/t/6878f2b7ebc68b50f8d8fa13/1752756954565/It+All+Starts+with+Play%21+%5BFull+Version%5D+-+FINAL.pdf>

PlayDay (previously known as National PlayDay) is a national celebration of the Child's Right to Play, it is held on the first Wednesday of August <https://www.playday.org.uk/>

# Appendices

**Appendix 1:**

## Play Areas Routine Inspection Course Certificates

- Natalie Mellors
- Jason Marsland

**Appendix 2:**

Grounds Management Association Level 1 Course: Introduction to Football Pitch Maintenance Certificates

- Rob Nelson
- Jason Marsland

**Appendix 3:**

Facilities and equipment list.

Risk Assessments of play equipment.