

Soft indoor play areas — Code of practice

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Committees responsible for this British Standard

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Consumer Policy Committee of BSI
Co-opted members

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Foreword

This British Standard has been prepared by Technical Panel SW/65/-/5.

This British Standard is based on *Indoor Play Areas — Guidance on safe practice*¹⁾. It makes provisions for those involved in the indoor play industry to provide safe indoor play facilities. This standard covers the indoor play facility as a whole, because it is the combination of good design, materials and management that creates a safe facility.

As a code of practice, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification and particular care should be taken to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 23 and a back cover.

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Introduction

Play is the means by which children discover and understand the world in which they live and is an essential element in a child's physical and mental growth.

It is important for the rounded development of children that, through the medium of play, they arrive at an understanding of danger, which provides the basis for assessing safety in a variety of situations. The balance between challenge and safety is an important consideration for all play providers. The best facilities and environments are those that, through careful design, management and maintenance, offer children high quality play experiences without compromising their safety.

Indoor play areas that children find attractive are generally those presenting different levels of challenge and difficulty. Children can explore solutions to these challenges and practise their newly acquired abilities in carefully designed settings, where the levels of risk have been assessed and, through supervision or design, are managed.

Precautions need to be taken by play providers to reduce the severity of injuries if children make the wrong judgement but the possibility of harm cannot be completely removed.

This British Standard aims to help play providers develop facilities that children find enjoyable but where the possibility of injury has been minimized.

1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for and guidance on the design, installation and management of contained indoor soft play areas.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document applies.

BS 5266-1, *Emergency lighting — Part 1: Code of practice for the emergency lighting of premises other than cinemas and certain other specified premises used for entertainment.*

BS 5306-3, *Fire extinguishing installations and equipment on premises — Part 3: Maintenance of portable fire extinguishers — Code of practice.*

BS 5306-8, *Fire extinguishing installations and equipment on premises — Part 8: Selection and installation of portable fire extinguishers — Code of practice.*

BS 5395-1, *Stairs, ladders and walkways — Part 1: Code of practice for the design, construction and maintenance of straight stairs and winders.*

BS 5395-2, *Stairs, ladders and walkways — Part 2: Code of practice for the design of helical and spiral stairs.*

BS 5395-3, *Stairs, ladders and walkways — Part 3: Code of practice for the design of industrial type stairs, permanent ladders and walkways.*

BS 5720, *Code of practice for mechanical ventilation and air conditioning in buildings.*

BS 5852:1990, *Methods of testing for assessment of the ignitability of upholstered seating by smouldering and flaming ignition sources.*

BS 5867-2:1980, *Specification for fabrics for curtains and drapes — Part 2: Flammability requirements.*

BS 5925, *Code of practice for ventilation principles and designing for natural ventilation.*

BS 6206, *Specification for impact performance requirements for flat safety glass and safety plastics for use in buildings.*

BS 6465-1, *Sanitary installation — Part 1: Code of practice for scale of provision, selection and installation of sanitary appliances.*

BS 7671, *Requirements for electrical installations — IEE wiring regulations — Sixteenth edition.*

BS 8206-1, *Lighting for buildings — Part 1: Code of practice for artificial lighting.*

BS 8206-2, *Lighting for buildings — Part 2: Code of practice for daylighting.*

BS EN 1125, *Building hardware — Panic exit devices operated by a horizontal bar — Requirements and test methods*.

BS EN 1176 (all parts), *Playground equipment*.

BS EN 1177, *Impact absorbency of playground surfacing — Safety requirements and test methods*.

BS EN 1838, *Lighting applications — Emergency lighting*.

PD CR 1752, *Ventilation for buildings — Design criteria for the indoor environment*.

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE. *Safe use and operation of inflatables including bouncy castles*.
HSE Information Sheet No. 7. London: HSE, April 2000.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1

indoor play facility

composite of play equipment and the building in which it is housed

3.2

indoor play equipment

items provided by a play equipment manufacturer or supplier

3.3

soft play area

indoor play facility designed so that children can engage in boisterous play, but where risk of injury is reduced through the design and selection of play equipment

NOTE For example, this might be achieved through the provision of padding and ball pools.

3.4

slow exit

exit designed to slow children down where their entry into traffic flows and/or social areas could prove hazardous

3.5

forced movement

movement to which a child is committed by the design of the equipment

NOTE For example, forced movement occurs on a slide.

3.6

traffic light

light used in conjunction with a slide, where the run-out is not visible and where some means of controlling the use of the slide is necessary to prevent collision

3.7

junior

child aged between five and twelve years

3.8

toddler

child aged between two and five years

3.9

carer

parent, guardian, childminder, relative or other responsible person, who provides adult care and is at least sixteen years of age

3.10

static equipment

equipment that remains fixed in a static position during use

NOTE For example, this could be a climbing net.

3.11**mobile equipment**

equipment that moves about fixed point(s) in use

NOTE For example, this could be a punch bag.

3.12**movable equipment**

equipment that is not fixed and can be moved by the user

NOTE For example, this could be foam shapes.

3.13**free-fall slide**

slide where the upper part of the chute is a near-vertical section, which then curves to a near-horizontal run-out

4 Planning and development**4.1 Preliminary considerations**

Before embarking upon an indoor play area project the following points should be considered:

- a) the type of facility, i.e. “stand-alone” or part of an existing business;
- b) whether it is intended to be supervised or unsupervised;
- c) whether it is to be located within an existing building or within its own purpose-built area;
- d) whether the facility is to be single- or multi-level;
- e) the type of equipment to be provided, i.e. static, mobile, movable or a combination of each;
- f) the persons for whom the facility is intended;
- g) the intended age groups;
- h) whether different age groups are to be provided with separate areas;
- i) how special needs and disabilities are to be catered for;
- j) whether the facility is to be used for functions and private parties;
- k) how adults are to be catered for;
- l) the intended opening hours;
- m) the arrangements for customer access and parking, including access and egress for emergency vehicles.

NOTE If the indoor play area is to be part of a crèche requiring local authority registration, the provisions of the Children Act [1] will apply.

Once these points have been addressed and the profile of the facility has been decided, a business plan should be written, which covers the building, operating, maintaining and staffing of the facility and includes a full risk assessment.

4.2 Consultation and advice

Before talking to prospective suppliers, advice should be sought from other operators of such facilities, the relevant local authorities and companies about the following aspects:

- a) child welfare;
- b) environmental health;
- c) food hygiene;
- d) health and safety;
- e) noise;
- f) planning and building controls;
- g) heating and air conditioning/ventilation (mechanical and electrical) considerations;

- h) fire precautions, fire safety management and means of escape;
- i) areas for insurance and maximum and minimum cover.

NOTE A list of useful addresses can be found in Annex A.

4.3 Choosing a supplier

Users of this standard should establish that the supplier is able to do the following, where relevant:

- a) provide product information and assistance;

NOTE 1 This might include information and instructions on installation procedures, post-installation procedures, inspection, maintenance, servicing, special disposal, and static and live loadings.

- b) demonstrate a quality control system for design, manufacture, installation, maintenance and repair;
- c) offer a post-installation independent inspection service, to be carried out before the facility is first open for public use;
- d) provide documented confirmation from the manufacturer that the play equipment has been installed in accordance with their instructions;
- e) provide an after-sales inspection, repair and maintenance service, including an emergency response and a warranty covering defects in design, manufacture and installation;
- f) demonstrate that they are covered by appropriate and adequate professional and product indemnity insurance;
- g) take new clients to existing facilities and/or provide a list of satisfied clients.

NOTE 2 The Indoor Play Section of the Association of Play Industries (the recognized trade association for the industry) can supply a list of approved members. (See Annex A for their contact details.)

5 Design and layout

5.1 Design and layout of building housing the play equipment

5.1.1 Indoor play facility design and layout checklist

Many problems can be avoided in any kind of indoor play facility if it is carefully designed. A well-designed indoor play facility requires careful and thorough planning of layout related to the system of management and age group use. Certain aspects of the design will be dependent on the particular management and supervision of each individual facility.

The following should be incorporated into the design and layout.

- a) Following a fire risk assessment and in consultation with the local fire prevention officer, emergency features and equipment should be provided as follows:
 - 1) fire-fighting equipment in accordance with BS 5306-8;
 - 2) emergency lighting in accordance with BS 5266-1 or BS EN 1838;
 - 3) emergency escapes in accordance with BS 5395-1, BS 5395-2, BS 5395-3 or BS EN 1125, as applicable;
 - 4) a minimum of two access/egress points with unobstructed approaches.
- b) Measures should be taken to prevent access to roofs and to avoid interference with lights, electrical fittings, heat sources, ventilation, ceilings and other structural features and fixings.
- c) Where tables and chairs are provided adjacent to the playing area, a clear passageway should be provided to the fire exits. Tables and chairs should be stable, with rounded corners and chamfered edges.
- d) Any other feature or facility accessible to the children within the indoor play facility should not present a significant risk, e.g. electrical wiring, loose ceiling panels, sharp or hard projections should all be made safe.
- e) Staff viewing areas and, where appropriate, public viewing areas should be located to allow a clear view of the playing area.
- f) If the indoor play facility entry/exit point leads directly into a restaurant/bar, traffic way or similar area, a slow exit should be provided.
- g) The design of the indoor play area should incorporate a means of securely locking or restricting access to the facility when not in use.

5.1.2 Doors

Doorways should be provided with vision panels and door closers where appropriate. Doorways should not open into traffic areas or into areas of the play space where they could present a hazard.

Measures should be taken to avoid finger and foot entrapment on doors.

NOTE For example, a special fitting is available to mask the hinged side of doors within the indoor play facility.

Handles should be chamfered or rounded and, where children need to use a door, should be fixed to a height of 610 mm.

5.1.3 Ventilation and lighting

The indoor play facility should have ventilation designed in accordance with BS 5720, BS 5925 or PD CR 1752 as appropriate.

NOTE Further guidance on interior ventilation can be obtained in the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers' *Guide A: Environmental design* [2] and *Guide B: Installation and equipment data* [3].

The indoor play facility should have adequate lighting in accordance with BS 8206-1 and BS 8206-2.

NOTE Further guidance on lighting can be obtained in the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers' *Code for interior lighting* [4].

5.1.4 Storage space

Suitable and sufficient storage should be provided for shoes and outdoor clothing outside the playing area.

5.1.5 Playing and other areas

Playing areas should be clearly identified and kept separate from refreshment, adult seating and other social areas.

5.1.6 Emergency access

Emergency doorways should be audio alarmed for supervision purposes and should lead to a safe area.

The choice of floor surface to and around emergency exits should take into account that children may not have time to put on shoes and will therefore only have socks on their feet.

5.1.7 Vision panels

If glass is used for vision panels in the vicinity of the indoor play area it should be safety glass as specified in BS 6206. If other materials are used for vision panels they should be inherently robust, e.g. transparent polycarbonates.

5.1.8 Toilet and baby changing facilities

Proper toilet and baby changing facilities are essential. These should be housed within the facility or close at hand. Soap and means of hand drying should be provided within the facility, in accordance with BS 6465-1.

NOTE Attention is drawn to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 [5], which specifies provisions for the temperature of water at wash hand basins.

5.1.9 Security aspects

Security aspects of design should be considered.

NOTE Doors with alarms, closed-circuit television and tagging systems may be used to enhance child security.

5.1.10 Children with special needs

There are many different types of special needs that can affect the way in which children use an indoor play facility and how it is managed, e.g. they might have specific safety needs. Before allowing use of a general purpose indoor play facility, therefore, managers should carry out a risk assessment and undertake appropriate measures. This can mean temporary or permanent alteration to the design, staffing and management.

NOTE 1 Attention is drawn to the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) [6].

NOTE 2 For health and safety reasons, access to and use of the facilities might have to be limited. Further guidance on the design of buildings to meet the needs of disabled people can be found in BS 8300, BS 5588-8 and PD 6523.

NOTE 3 Kidsactive, who specialize in play opportunities for disabled children, are a useful source of advice (see Annex A).