



Supporting the  
UK Play Industry

## Outdoor Adult Fitness Equipment

The installation of fitness equipment has accelerated over the past few years with many providers sourcing a range of equipment from a number of suppliers around the UK and Europe as well as further afield.

**What is outdoor fitness equipment?** It is to encourage repetitive movement to promote fitness in youths and adults.

There have been a number of initiatives to try to implement a standard for this type of equipment including the French XP S 52-904, PAS888 and a draft German Standard. In 2015 a new standard was published by CEN EN16630:2015 Permanently installed outdoor fitness equipment – Safety requirements and test methods. This document has been based on the German and French standards 'For youths and adults taller than 1.4m use only'. All other conflicting standards are withdrawn following publication of EN 16630.

One of the biggest debates around Outdoor Adult Fitness Equipment has been its proximity to children's play spaces and its suitability for such areas. The reality is that this type of equipment cannot meet with the requirements for play (BS EN 1176) as the scope of this standard relates specifically to play items intended for use by children. These would generally be viewed as users up to the age of 14 years. Nor can it meet the requirements of EN 957 as this standard relates specifically to Stationary Fitness Equipment intended for use in supervised Gymsnasiums. These products are not intended for 'Play' as they are designed for particular exercise types. The scale and configuration of the products target an adult user, rather than children. Furthermore it is proven with anthropological data that excessive use of this type of equipment can cause severe joint problems in children, particularly when using apparatus that is not intended or proportioned for their use.

Some of the equipment items have pinch or crush points where the movement is restricted by the use of buffers and some items have extreme movement that presents a risk to younger or less competent users that may be passing by or by use of the equipment itself as it is not designed for their age group.

### Fitness products and young children rationale

- These types of repetitive motions are not recommended for young child who require a much broader activity range for overall body development.
- Young child will generally not have the focus to carry out repetitive motions as intended. If encouraged to interact with the products of this type they will likely experiment with unintended uses, i.e. play with them. Items provided for 'Play' should comply with EN 1176, which is not the intention of these products.
- Products of this type are generally scaled for mature users.
- If the products are used in an uncontrolled way there could be hazards associated with them, such as, impact from moving parts, stressing of muscle groups through over extension and entrapment.

### Fitness products benefits

- The equipment is designed to promote physical activity across a wide range of abilities for youths and adults.
- The intention of Outdoor Fitness Equipment is to provide a signalled, free access facility providing benefits of activities that could include cardiovascular, strength, toning, balance, coordination and flexibility exercises. All help promote healthy living and that could form the 'gateway' to other more intensive activities.
- Not play equipment.

### Association of Play Industries

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### Positioning of Outdoor Gym Equipment

There have been concerns that some equipment is being installed either in or directly adjacent to children's play spaces. EN 16630 is very clear that these products should be positioned away from Children's Play facilities.

A recent accident in the UK where a 6 year old child suffered a severed finger has highlighted the need to ensure a standardised approach to this subject. There are also reports of injuries from abroad where this type of equipment is in use. Outdoor adult fitness equipment has only recently arrived in the UK and the UK committee will monitor the effectiveness of this Standard and work within CEN to further consider safety, particularly with aspects relating to unsupervised use and crush injuries. For this and other reasons as above it is strongly recommended that products of this type be carefully located to ensure they cannot be confused with children's playground equipment.

A suitable position will require a judgement to be made as part of a Risk v Benefit assessment, with Separation being provided by:

- Distance
- Landscaping
- Fencing (last resort!)
- Signage (always recommended)
- Combination of above

It should be obvious to visitors that the Fitness products are not intended to form part of the play provision.

Areas identified for fitness should be clearly marked as not suitable for children's play and all items should be clearly and permanently marked with instructions on how each item should be used.

Outdoor Adult Fitness Equipment offers many benefits to the local communities in which it is installed and we should not lose sight of the potential good that these items can offer; but at the same time we have a responsibility to ensure that all reasonable and practicable measures are implemented to protect children and other less able users.

The Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII)\* and the Association of Play Industries (API) support the methodology outlined above and would actively encourage all members to adhere to and promote this approach.

\*Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) [www.playinspectors.com](http://www.playinspectors.com)