

# Play Must Stay: A Manifesto for Children's Health

The general election on 12 December represents a chance to demand far-reaching changes in policies affecting children and a long overdue opportunity to place children at the heart of politics. Childhood inactivity is one of the chief causes of spiralling childhood obesity and poor mental health among children.

This is a national crisis and the Association of Play Industries believes the silent closures and neglect of hundreds of public playgrounds across the UK should be reversed. The overwhelming majority of children live in urban areas where community playgrounds are their only opportunity for free, outdoor play.

Children are also experiencing an unprecedented 'pull' to stay indoors from screens/digital culture. The result? Millions of children are spending hours indoors, inactive and alone, with disastrous consequences for their physical and mental health.

Free, unstructured outdoor play is not an add-on or a luxury; it is essential for children's normal, healthy development. Without outdoor play at the heart of children's everyday lives, they will not develop the vital physical, mental, emotional and social skills necessary to live happy, fulfilling lives. An entire generation's health is being compromised unless we stop and re-set.

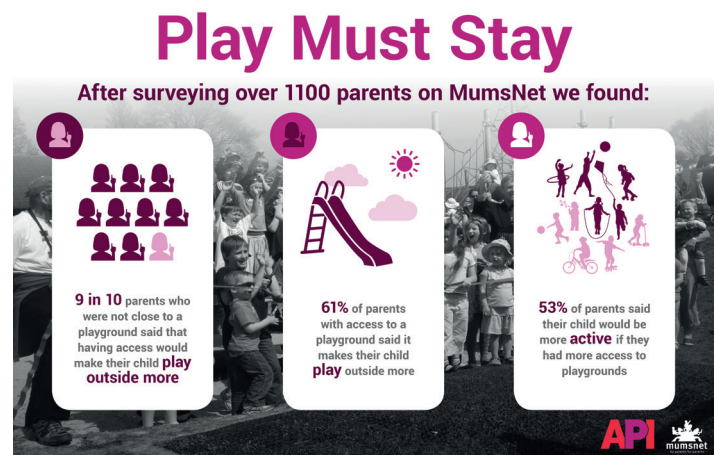


**This manifesto intends  
to restore outdoor play  
as children's default  
leisure activity before  
it is too late.**



**There is an alarming and ongoing decline in public playgrounds, with local authorities nationwide forced to close and/or neglect hundreds of community play spaces because of reductions to their funding.**

Our research shows that the **majority of parents** find it difficult to persuade their children to leave their screens and **believe that access to safe, local and quality playgrounds does make children play outside more**. The majority of parents of children with health problems like obesity say that the lack of public playgrounds has played a role in their children's difficulties.



**We are calling on the next government to provide urgent and sustained investment in public playgrounds before they disappear for good, by funding and empowering local authorities to:**

- 1** Reinstate the hundreds of playgrounds that have been closed in recent years
- 2** Cease plans for any planned closures
- 3** Undertake local audits of playgrounds in the community
- 4** Secure the long-term sustainability of public playgrounds by providing ringfenced funds solely for this purpose for the duration of the next parliament and beyond

**We are also supporting the call for a dedicated Cabinet Minister for Children and Young People to lobby for investment in playgrounds and protect these funds for this and future generations.**

