

# Dogs on Play Areas

## The Problem

Dogs on children's playgrounds represent a major health and injury hazard:

- Toxocariasis - a rare infection caused by roundworm parasites, most commonly found in cats, dogs and foxes faeces.
- Children and young adults are usually affected due to contact with contaminated soil or sand within play areas by swallowing the infected egg.
- There is evidence that dogs can also carry E.coli and hepatitis in their faeces.
- There are over 7,000 admissions to hospital for dog bites and attacks annually in the U.K. and under 10's were most likely to be admitted. (NHS Digital)

## The Law

### **The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act: 2014 Dog control orders / Public space protection orders**

[www.gov.uk/control-dog-public/overview](http://www.gov.uk/control-dog-public/overview)

Under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Any person who permits a dog in their charge to foul any area that has a Dog Control order or Public space protection order enforcement is committing an offence.

Parish Councils can change or revoke existing dog control orders but can no longer make new ones. From October 2017, existing DCO's will become public space protection orders (PSPO's).

Public space protection orders will be set up by District Councils (but not Parish Councils) and they only apply to public land.

## Protecting children and play areas

There are a number of measures which can be taken to reduce the problems of dogs on playgrounds before considering design solutions:

- provide a fenced exercise area for dogs
- require dogs to be on a lead in parks and recreation fields
- provide poop-scoops and containers
- empty them regularly
- request owners to remove faeces
- provide clear signs
- develop publicity and education programmes

### Designing the play area

There are a number of design solutions to dog fouling and dog attacks:

- fencing
- self-closing gates or dog-grids
- provide clear signs banning dogs
- provide a catch for leads on the outside of the fence

### Maintaining the play area

Removing dog faeces from the playground is an unpleasant task for maintenance and cleansing staff. Some loose-fill surfaces (sand/bark) in areas will also attract cats which can also spread diseases in their droppings. In some areas fox and sheep droppings may be a problem. Operators should:

- check the playground regularly, preferably daily
- remove any faeces
- have an approved system for collection and disposal
- A leaflet on chemicals on playgrounds is available.

### Guide dogs

Guide dogs for the visually impaired are generally excluded from this advice.

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### Contact Us

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