

Natural play

Be inspired

Produced by Grouphowork London on behalf of the Neighbourhoods Green Partnership

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IMPROVING THE GREEN SPACES FOR SOCIAL HOUSING



Remember how a fallen tree trunk could provide hours of entertainment, or a snail race could give endless fun? Natural play is all about using our surroundings as a playground. Whether it's including natural features in a new play space or just reclaiming a grass bank and making it a fort. Natural play is all around us, it's free and it's kind to the environment.

Well-designed playgrounds are great. But too often playground design is dictated by maintenance budgets rather than the needs of young people. The fact is we're surrounded by great opportunities to play. In the same way a child is more interested in the wrapping paper than the toy, frequently you will find young people digging in the mud and hiding in the bushes that surround the fenced off areas filled with brightly coloured safety-surfacing and metal play equipment.

Remember back to your childhood. What are your memories of play? Sliding on a slide or swinging on a swing? Or running through the long grass, climbing a tree, building a snowman; making mud pies or perfecting rose petal perfume?

Natural play is just that, natural. With a little imagination your surroundings can be the perfect playground for your children. Not only is it free and easy – it's on your doorstep! It also gives children experiences and opportunities they wouldn't have visiting the local play area. It encourages creativity, helps build social skills, improves vocabulary, and

introduces a level of risk that children can judge for themselves, which has been proven to be of great value in a child's development.

The benefits of natural play have led to a huge rise in popularity of this approach with playground designers and manufacturers. Many new playgrounds include natural play features and play experts are increasingly involved to ensure that designs are safe and fun. Tree trunks can be used as climbing frames; grass banks and tunnels as forts, dens, slides or anything a child can imagine. A range of plants with different smells and colours can also provide opportunities for children to play and be creative.

Natural play areas are great to provide these opportunities in an urban environment and there are countless opportunities right on your doorstep to convert boring estate grounds into fun places for children to play.

Inspired? Read the 'Guide to applying for funding' to find out how your estate could get its own natural play area.

www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk

Natural Estates is a partnership project of Neighbourhoods Green: Broomlegh Housing Association, Circle 33 (with London & Quadrant), CityWest Homes, Gallions Housing Association, Hackney Homes, Homes for Harlingey, Peabody, Places for People, and Southern Foundation, with Groundwork London, London Wildlife Trust and Natural England