Playing Fields Statement Draft

Sport England's organisational statement on the importance of playing fields

November 2026

Playing fields are essential infrastructure for sport and an active nation. They provide the space needed for pitch sports to take place, supporting participation, training, competition and player development across all ages and abilities. Beyond their formal sporting role, playing fields also create opportunities for informal physical activity, active play, volunteering and social connection, supporting healthier lives and stronger communities.

Sport England works with partners across the public, education, voluntary and sporting sectors to protect, provide and enhance playing fields that meet the needs of current and future generations. Together, we want to ensure that communities have access to the right quantity, quality, accessibility and availability to playing fields locally supporting healthier, active communities

Supporting text

Playing fields are often where people's sporting journeys begin. From a child's first experience of play and physical activity through to lifelong participation in sport, they provide spaces for learning, development, achievement and social connection.

Beyond their sporting and community value, playing fields form an important part of the nation's green infrastructure. They can help manage rainfall runoff, reduce surface water flood risk, cool urban areas, support biodiversity and contribute to climate adaptation, while continuing to provide spaces for sport, physical activity and play.

Playing fields also make a significant contribution to individuals physical and mental health and wellbeing. Providing accessible opportunities for exercise, recreation, social interaction and contact with green space, help support healthier and more resilient communities.

Collectively, England's playing fields are vital community assets, whether located in parks, recreation grounds, schools and colleges, sports clubs, universities, or other

places, irrespective of ownership. They provide opportunities for formal sport, informal recreation, training, competition and active play.

As communities grow and change, it is important that a good supply of playing fields are available in the right locations and of the right quality to meet current and future needs. Achieving this requires the value of playing fields to be fully recognised, strong planning policies which are given substantial weight in decision making, strategic investment and robust evidence of supply and demand.

Up-to-date local assessments of need, often developed into Playing Pitch Strategies play a critical role in understanding existing provision, identifying future requirements and helping inform decisions about protection, enhancement and new provision.

The long-term future of playing fields depends on the organisations that manage them. Building the capacity and capability of clubs and other providers helps create thriving, sustainable and well used facilities. A well maintained and actively used playing field, valued by its community is the strongest form of protection.

By working together across planning, investment and delivery, we can help create and maintain a sustainable network of playing fields that supports participation, improves health and wellbeing, strengthens communities and provides opportunities for current and future generations.