

# 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.

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, some work on PAS888 and a draft German Standard. Work has started on a European Standard but realistically it will be a minimum of two or three years before anything is likely to be published. The German test authority TÜV has had a test protocol in place since 2007, which they have used to certify products of this type throughout Europe since that time.

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.

The RPII & API have concerns that some equipment is being installed either in or directly adjacent to children's play spaces and there is majority agreement that some common advice is required for all suppliers and providers in this area.

A recent accident in the UK where a 6 year old child suffered a severed finger has highlighted the need to act swiftly in offering a more standardised approach to this subject. There are also reports of injuries from abroad where this type of equipment is in use.

The most common agreed position is that this type of equipment should not, under any circumstances, be installed inside an area that is dedicated to play for children under the age of 12 years or for less competent children; locating the equipment alongside areas specifically designed for teenagers or areas dedicated to adult fitness is appropriate. If there is a need to site the equipment adjacent to a children's play area then a minimum separation of 25 metres should be maintained, or segregation by some other means to provide a clear separation. If possible

additional screening should be considered to reduce the inducement to children. Routes leading to children's play areas should also be avoided to remove the temptation for children on a visit to a play area treating the equipment as an item of play equipment.

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 RPII & API support the methodology outlined above and would actively encourage all members to adhere to and promote this approach.

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