

3 November 2020



Mr Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Jenrick

As a children's play charity, we are very concerned that the health and wellbeing of children beyond the school gates is in danger of being sidelined by the national restrictions due to be imposed this Thursday. As the details of these restrictions are being agreed, we are writing to urge you to ensure that adventure playgrounds and other outdoor, out of school play schemes are able to remain open.

We note that the guidance currently states that some childcare activities will still be able to run 'where reasonably necessary to enable parents to work or for the purposes of respite care,' but suggests that youth clubs and groups are expected to cease operating. Adventure playgrounds fall somewhat between these two categories of provision in that the children who use them are usually younger than those attending youth clubs. They are not 'childcare' either but do however play a major role in offering respite for the families who depend on them, many of whom are already living in challenging circumstances.

Adventure playgrounds are currently offering children the opportunity to play outside only and are restricting access to their indoor spaces for safety reasons. These are supervised, Covid-safe, risk-assessed places for children in parts of the city where families are likely to be living in overcrowded homes with no access to outside space and under varying degrees of economic hardship. These unique, staffed facilities are a lifeline for families. Children's health and wellbeing stands to suffer far more if they were to close, than if they are permitted to remain open.

As long as schools and municipal playgrounds remain open, we ask you to ensure that adventure playgrounds and other outdoor, out of school play schemes can also continue to support children and families through this most tumultuous of times. Children have already suffered disproportionately from the impacts of coronavirus restrictions and they should not be forced to bear the brunt of further measures taken to contain a disease which itself poses a very low risk to their health.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melian Mansfield".

Melian Mansfield MBE
Chair, London Play

Copied to:

Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education
Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London
Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner for England
Cllr Peter John OBE, chair, London Councils
Cllr James Jamieson – chairman, Local Government Association

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