

Playgrounds - A Bright New Future?

Wouldn't it be fantastic if all Army Garrisons, RAF Stations or Naval Bases had a wonderful playground which met the needs of children from 3 to 16 years of age? Wouldn't it be great if young Mums could meet up for a chat, sit at a bench whilst keeping a watchful eye on their offspring? Wouldn't it be marvellous for teenagers to have somewhere to meet, where they could use equipment designed for them?

This might well be a vision for the future but it has recently become a reality. At RAF Lyneham younger children and teenagers are already making good use of a wonderful new playground, made possible by the sterling efforts of the Community Development Worker, Lisa Mitchell. Lisa has brought this project to fruition by firstly asking the community what they wanted and then going out and getting the required funding from a variety of different sources..... the Lottery, the Local Parish Council, RAF Central Fund and Community First. Having fed the wish list from the community to nine different playground companies, it was up to them to go away and come up with a winning design. The winning design became reality and the playground was officially opened in May 2008.



A section of the smaller children's play area - Lyneham Aeropark

The new RAF Aeropark at Lyneham provided the inspiration for MHS to have a radical rethink on playgrounds.

All 3 Families Federations have been approached and their views sought on how they would like to see the future of Forces playgrounds. Community Development Workers have been asked to feedback any relevant information from their communities. Using this information MHS has developed a new strategy for the future of playgrounds throughout England and Wales.

In the Autumn work should start on three playgrounds, one for the RAF at Odiham, one for the Navy at Torpoint and the Army one at Bulford Garrison. The playgrounds will be similar in design to the Aeropark at Lyneham but it is essential that they fit the needs of the existing site and the local community. These will be used to show families how we intend to take Forces playgrounds forward into the 21st Century.

MODern Housing Solutions (MHS) has to prioritise its annual budget given to it by Defence Estates for upgrade work. Inevitably the need to upgrade

boilers, roofs, bathrooms and kitchens will always be a greater priority than playgrounds.

At present there are a large number of playgrounds that are in disrepair and that no longer meet the needs of the community. Rationalising the number of playparks without removing any of those in isolated communities will allow us to concentrate funding on building bigger and better playparks that cater for 3 to 16 year olds. MHS are also committed to looking at alternative funding streams so that we can really make a difference to play facilities in Forces communities in future years.



MHS recognise that good playgrounds make a huge difference to Forces families. With so many personnel deployed and busy supporting operations it is essential that their children are able to make new friends and play in well equipped and modern playgrounds.

An example of some of the teenage equipment - Aeropark Lyneham

It takes 6 weeks to build a new playground, such a small period of time to make a really positive difference to a child and parent's life. MHS look forward to being able to make a real difference in terms of Forces playgrounds.