# Play well: quality checklist for health play services



In collaboration withA logo with a group of people

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

## How to use this checklist

This quality checklist is designed to be used by health play services delivering therapeutic play to babies, children and young people in England and by the services within which these teams work.

It will help users assess whether they are meeting the recommended [standards for health play services in England](https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/play-well-recommended-standards-for-health-play-services/) and support auditing, monitoring, and evaluation of services.

The checklist should be used alongside the:

* [Play well: guidelines for commissioning and designing health play services](https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/play-well-guidelines-for-commissioning-and-designing-health-play-services/)
* [Play well: recommended standards for health play services](https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/play-well-recommended-standards-for-health-play-services/)

## About Starlight

[Starlight](http://www.starlight.org.uk/) is the national charity for children’s play in healthcare. It supports health professionals using therapeutic play with children to boost their wellbeing and resilience during treatment, care, and recovery from illness. Starlight’s mission is to enable all children in the UK to have their right to play protected and provided for when they are receiving healthcare in or out of hospital. Informed by research into what works best, the charity provides direct services to children and their health play teams; and advocates for the full recognition of children’s play as an integral component of their health and care.

To enquire about support to adopt and implement these standards, please email [healthplay.services@starlight.org.uk](mailto:healthplay.services@starlight.org.uk)

## Quality checklist

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| **Ward or department:** |  |  |  |  |
| **Date of review:** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Audit results**  The rating for each standard is based on the aggregate rating of the relevant indicators and measures.  The overall rating is based on the aggregate rating for all recommendations. | | | | |
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|  | **No progress** | **Some progress** | **Significant progress** | **Fully met** |
| Standard 1 |  |  |  |  |
| Standard 2 |  |  |  |  |
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| Standard 7 |  |  |  |  |
| Overall rating |  |  |  |  |
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| **Summary** +Key points from audit +Progress made since last audit | | | | |
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### We have a clear policy or standard operating procedure for play and we promote the importance of play across our service.

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|  | **Measures and indicators** | **No progress** | **Some progress** | **Significant progress** | **Indicator fully met** |
| a) | Play, and supporting access to appropriate and safe play provision, is the responsibility of all staff who may encounter children in the course of their work. |  |  |  |  |
| b) | The importance of play and the role of health play staff is included in training for all staff who may encounter children in the course of their work. |  |  |  |  |
| c) | An internal policy is in place outlining children’s right to play, the specialised nature of play in healthcare and our commitment to upholding these principles. or: We have a standard operating procedure for our play service. |  |  |  |  |
| d) | Our policy considers the play needs of children visiting adult patients. |  |  |  |  |
| e) | Our play services manager is an advocate for play and is responsible for sharing and communicating the progress and needs of the play service at trust board level. |  |  |  |  |
| f) | We have easily accessible pages on our internal and external websites containing up-to-date information about play provision, the health play service team, community play services, contact details and referral pathways. |  |  |  |  |
| g) | Our health play staff take every opportunity to promote play within our service, and with children and their families in the community. |  |  |  |  |
| h) | We regularly seek feedback from children and their families on the play provision available to them. |  |  |  |  |
| i) | We encourage and support the continued professional development of our health play staff. |  |  |  |  |
| j) | We encourage, support and plan for health play specialist students and apprentices to be professionally mentored within our service. |  |  |  |  |

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|  | **Progress aim** | **Key staff** | **Completion date** | **Notes** |
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### All children have access to safe and appropriate play resources while in our care.

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|  | **Measures and indicators** | **No progress** | **Some progress** | **Significant progress** | **Indicator fully met** |
| a) | Developmentally appropriate toys and play resources are available for all children we care for, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. |  |  |  |  |
| b) | All toys and play resources are kept clean and in a good, safe, working condition and are audited regularly. |  |  |  |  |
| c) | Robust infection control and toy cleaning policies are adhered to and available upon request. |  |  |  |  |
| d) | All open access play areas have an up-to-date, visible cleaning rota and at least one named member of staff who is responsible for each area. |  |  |  |  |
| e) | Toys and resources are inclusive and accessible and reflect the diversity of the children we care for. |  |  |  |  |

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### All children have access to play services, including qualified and registered health play specialists.

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|  | **Measures and indicators** | **No progress** | **Some progress** | **Significant progress** | **Indicator fully met** |
| a) | We employ qualified and registered health play specialists to provide specialised therapeutic play interventions, including but not limited to preparation, alternative focus activities, distraction therapy and post-procedural support. |  |  |  |  |
| b) | Health play staff are employed to encourage and facilitate normalising play and recreation. |  |  |  |  |
| c) | Sufficient, appropriately qualified staff are available to meet children’s needs for play, recreation, and clinical support regardless of age, developmental stage or state of health. |  |  |  |  |
| d) | Health play staff are available to inpatient wards 7 days a week. |  |  |  |  |
| e) | Health play staff are available to emergency departments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. |  |  |  |  |
| f) | Consistent, facilitated play sessions are offered to children who are frequently admitted, or admitted for significant periods, and to those who frequently access outpatient or daycare settings. This includes children who receive their care in the community or a hospice setting. |  |  |  |  |
| g) | We have play and recreation programmes for all children admitted for longer stays and those who have frequent admissions. This includes those who regularly spend time in outpatient or daycare settings and children who receive care in the community or a hospice setting. |  |  |  |  |
| h) | We have play and recreation programmes for all children admitted for longer stays or have frequent admissions. This includes those that regularly spend time in outpatient or daycare settings and children who receive care in the community or hospice setting. |  |  |  |  |
| i) | The play and recreation needs of children admitted to isolation cubicles are considered and assessed on a daily basis. |  |  |  |  |
| j) | Children are supported to prepare for invasive procedures by a health play specialist. |  |  |  |  |
| k) | Our health play staff have access to medical areas where children would benefit from their presence. This includes anaesthetic rooms, radiology suites, nuclear medicine and other areas. |  |  |  |  |
| l) | We have a robust referral system in place for accessing support from health play specialists. |  |  |  |  |
| m) | All general and therapeutic play interventions are documented in line with trust policy. |  |  |  |  |

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### Play is recognised and advocated for by all members of the multidisciplinary team.

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|  | **Measures and indicators** | **No progress** | **Some progress** | **Significant progress** | **Indicator fully met** |
| a) | Our health play staff are recognised as part of the multi-disciplinary team. This includes attending multi-disciplinary team meetings, handovers, case conferences, and safeguarding meetings. |  |  |  |  |
| b) | Our multi-disciplinary teams encourage play and adopt playful approaches to communicating with, treating, and supporting children. |  |  |  |  |
| c) | Our multi-disciplinary team work collaboratively with our health play staff to ensure that all children with complex or special educational needs, high anxiety, or poor mental health, have a health passport, or ‘All About Me’ document in place. |  |  |  |  |
| d) | Our multi-disciplinary teams have access to training on the use of play in a healthcare environment. |  |  |  |  |
| e) | All multi-disciplinary team members know how to refer children and families to our health play service or a local community play team and make such referrals as appropriate. |  |  |  |  |

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### Our community health play staff are recognised as an integral part of the service.

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|  | **Measures and indicators** | **No progress** | **Some progress** | **Significant progress** | **Indicator fully met** |
| a) | Our hospital play team and our community health play team are in regular communication and liaise with one another as appropriate. |  |  |  |  |
| b) | We have a robust referral pathway in place to ensure that the children we care for have consistent access to play support, in hospitals, hospices and within the community (including children looked after by the local authority). |  |  |  |  |
| c) | We encourage networking and shared learning opportunities between our community- and hospital-based health play teams. |  |  |  |  |

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### Our healthcare environment for children is playful, welcoming, and accessible.

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|  | **Measures and indicators** | **No progress** | **Some progress** | **Significant progress** | **Indicator fully met** |
| a) | Children in inpatient settings have access to a designated play space away from their bedside 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (unless restricted due to infection control procedures). |  |  |  |  |
| b) | Inpatients aged 13 or older have access to a designated young people’s area 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (unless restricted due to infection control procedures). |  |  |  |  |
| c) | Our designated play spaces are safe and fully adaptable to meeting the differing needs of the children using them. |  |  |  |  |
| d) | Our health play staff have access to an appropriate and private space where they can carry out one-to-one therapeutic play sessions. |  |  |  |  |
| e) | Our health play staff have sufficient lockable storage for the safe keeping of play and therapeutic resources, ensuring that our play spaces are safe and well-managed. |  |  |  |  |
| f) | We use child-friendly design principles to make the healthcare environment playful and welcoming. |  |  |  |  |
| g) | We consult children, young people, and their parents or carers when we want to design or improve a setting where children will be cared for. |  |  |  |  |
| h) | A proportion of our available outdoor space is suitable and utilised for promoting outdoor play opportunities for all children who can use it. |  |  |  |  |
| i) | We regularly use the 15 steps challenge to allow children and young people to assess and improve the child-friendliness of our environment. |  |  |  |  |

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### All our health play staff are trained and qualified to the recommended level for their role, registered with their professional body wherever relevant, and supported in their continued professional development.

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|  | **Measures and indicators** | **No progress** | **Some progress** | **Significant progress** | **Indicator fully met** |
| a) | Our health play staff work within the role profiles aligned to Agenda for Change. |  |  |  |  |
| b) | All health play specialists are qualified for their role and registered with The Society of Health Play Specialists or are in relevant accredited training. |  |  |  |  |
| c) | Health play staff have regular opportunities for continued professional development (CPD) and applications for study leave are given due consideration. |  |  |  |  |
| d) | Health play staff annually record their CPD and reflective practice for their appraisal and/or professional re-registration. |  |  |  |  |
| e) | Regular reflective practice and/or clinical supervision sessions take place for our health play staff, either as a group or individually. |  |  |  |  |
| f) | All our health play staff uphold the relevant codes of conduct for their profession. |  |  |  |  |

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