

The Positive Effect of Play



Picture: Unit Photographer 4 Rifles

In 2008, MODern Housing Solutions (MHS) in partnership with Defence Estates Operations Housing (DE), decided to look at providing Forces families with a new era of play facilities.

By identifying the need to engage with the local Forces community and make sure that any provision of play facilities met with their needs and by engaging with the Families Federations, MHS and DE decided to look at the following:

- Super playparks to cater for children from 3 -16 years of age.
- Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) for older children and adults.
- Modern, robust equipment.
- Uniquely themed playparks.

At the beginning of January 2009, MHS had project managed two new MUGAs at RAF Odiham and RMB Chivenor, two new super playparks at Bulford Camp and RN Torpoint with a third under construction at RAF Odiham and a fourth at Blandford Camp in the pipeline. In Financial Year (FY) 09/10 there will be yet more to come.



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At each stage families and units have been consulted; making sure that as the customer they were provided with facilities that not only met their needs but that would also be welcomed by their communities. Prior to the official opening ceremonies those units who have now received new playparks were encouraged to attend a 'Families' Presentation.'

Children were provided with goody bags and asked to enter the 'playpark naming competition' whilst Mums and Dads were given the opportunity to get a real feel for what the new playpark would look like. Local community police attended so that they could speak to everyone about vandalism prevention and how they would assist in making sure that the playparks were policed effectively.



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Families and units were encouraged to attend the opening ceremonies to celebrate the arrival of this new era of play facilities. At the Bulford opening ceremony of the new 'Flying Fox' playpark local school children from the Kiwi school were chosen to take some time out of their classroom routine to attend the opening ceremony and take part in an early Easter egg hunt.

Feedback from families and units has been extremely positive with one Mum commenting on Garrison Radio that the playpark was 'Absolutely wonderful with lots of things for all ages'.

The fact that the playparks are constantly filled with happy children and Mums sitting talking to one another is certain proof of the positive effect of play for Forces families.