

## **Important Information regarding Cycle Helmets and Children's Safety**

We would like to take a moment to share some important information from the OPAL Play organisation regarding the use of cycle helmets for children during outdoor play.

While cycle helmets are crucial for adult cyclists on longer journeys, research suggests that for children, the compulsory use of helmets may actually do more harm than good in some situations. Children's use of bicycles differs greatly from adults. Adults typically cycle from home to work or another activity, where they put on their helmet at the start of the journey and remove it at the end. In contrast, children often make very short, spontaneous journeys while playing outdoors, sometimes cycling only short distances of less than 50 metres at a time. They also get on and off their bikes frequently during play, which makes the constant wearing of a helmet less practical and potentially more hazardous.

One of the significant risks associated with children wearing helmets in play areas, especially around climbing frames and similar equipment, is the potential for head entrapment, which could lead to strangulation. Playground equipment is designed to prevent normal-sized heads from becoming trapped. However, a helmet could prevent a child from slipping through a gap safely, increasing the risk of strangulation or more severe injuries. If a child were to fall or get caught in equipment, the risk of a broken bone is far less severe than the danger of a broken neck or strangulation.

Additionally, poorly fitting helmets can increase the risk of injury. If a helmet is not properly adjusted, it may slip down over the child's eyes, impairing their vision and making them more prone to accidents. A helmet that is too loose or too tight can also fail to offer the necessary protection in the event of a fall.

Because of these reasons, children will not wear cycle helmets during OPAL play. We believe this approach will reduce the risks associated with play and appreciate your understanding and cooperation in keeping our children safe.