

Garden Safety

This leaflet provides advice on how you can help keep your child with challenging behaviour safe in the garden.

This leaflet was compiled by the Hammersmith and Fulham Disabled Children's Team Occupational Therapists following a collaborative parent workshop with the Queensmill Trust Occupational Therapy team. The leaflet is shared here with their permission.

Children with disabilities may have a reduced awareness of danger and they may be at risk of absconding from home garden areas. They may need additional or altered fencing and secure gates to enable them to play safely in your garden. The garden can be a useful outlet for extra energy.

General considerations:

- **Your child may still require a high level of supervision in the garden despite suitable safety measures being in place.**
- Trampolines and punch bags can be a useful outlet for extra energy. If your child has sensory integration difficulties, this should be discussed with your child's school Occupational Therapy team for advice about using these appropriately.
- Suitable door locks to external doors may resolve difficulties in order to ensure that your child is only in the garden when closely supervised.
- Consider maintaining security of your property when making any alterations.
- Consider putting "stop" signs on garden gate / back door to garden / fences if appropriate
- Ensure that garden furniture / toys are not left where they can be used to climb on fences.

Examples of possible solutions Fencing:

- Consider having large plants / hedges along the fence to deter your child from climbing the fence.
- Large wooden boards could be fixed to the inside of the fencing to cover up arris rails (horizontal fencing support rails) to reduce climbing risks.
- Fencing that generally helps to prevent children from leaving a garden needs to be around 2 metre or 6 feet high with the arris rails on the outside (flat surface on the inside of the fence). This reduces the chance of your child using the arris rails to climb over the fence.
- Please note that planning permission may be required for rear garden fencing higher. There are also limitations on the height allowed for front garden fencing.
- Be aware that trellises on top of fencing may increase the height of the fence but are often not very secure, and could fall should your child try to climb over it / hang on to it.
- Sensors or alarm systems on external door openings may be useful. A pager could be used to alert you to your child attempting to climb over the fence or opening an external door.

Garden Gates:

- Where there is a risk your child will leave through the garden gate, ensure that the gate has a lockable form of security that your child cannot access. A sliding bolt with a padlock could be used and a “Stop” sign could be put on the gate if child understands this.
- Spring loaded gates may help ensure that the gate is not left open.
- You may be able to secure a large wooden board across the gate to cover arris rails (horizontal support rails) where your child may be using them to climb over the gate.

Manhole Covers:

- Where your child is lifting the manhole cover, put a large pot plant on top of the cover to deter them.
- Weighted and lockable manhole covers are commercially available from builders’ merchants.

Examples of Suppliers:

Contractors for carpentry works, such as fencing.

- Local contractors
- www.checkatrade.com – helps you find recommended local tradespeople

Building merchants for lockable manhole covers.

- www.drainageonline.co.uk
- www.screwfix.com

Sensors and Alerts:

- Frequency Precision, www.frequencyprecision.com 01837 810 590
- Tunstall Group Ltd, <https://www.tunstall.com> 01977 661 234
- Sensorium, www.sensorium.co.uk 0800 056 5454
- Easy Link UK, www.easylinkuk.co.uk 01536 264 968

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