

# BARRIERS, FACILITATORS AND SOLUTIONS FOR ACTIVE INCLUSIVE PLAY FOR CHILDREN WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY IN THE NETHERLANDS. A QUALITATIVE STUDY.

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# I have a question for you

- **Do you use play in therapy?**
- **Do you use outside play as a therapy goal?**
- **Do you use coaching to increase inclusion?**
- **Do you provide therapy in the community?**



# Background

Playing outside is fun.

Positive effects on motor-, social- and cognitive development and overall health.<sup>1</sup>

Children with physical disabilities are less physically active.<sup>2</sup>

The most important contributor to physical activity is outside play.<sup>3</sup>

Multiple barriers regarding participation in playgrounds.

De Speeltuimbende (the Playground gang)

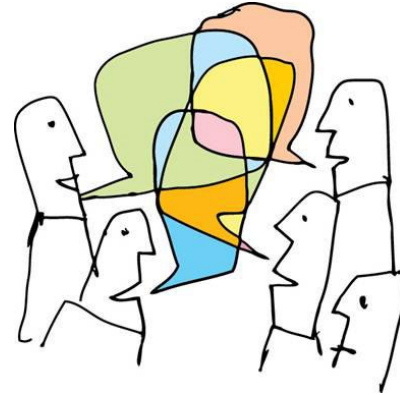
Improvements of the physical accessibility did not increase participation.



<sup>1</sup> Martin JJ. Benefits and barriers to physical activity for individuals with disabilities: A social-relational model of disability perspective. *Disability and Rehabilitation* 2013;35(24):2030-2037.  
<sup>2</sup> Rimmer JA, Rowland JL. Physical activity for youth with disabilities: A critical need in an underserved population. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation* 2008;11(2):141-148.  
<sup>3</sup> Burdette HL. Parental report of outdoor playtime as a measure of physical activity in preschool aged children. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 2004;158:353-357.  
<sup>4</sup> Moore A, Lynch H. Accessibility and usability of playground environments for children under 12: A scoping review. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 2015;22(5):331-344.

# Goal

The purpose of this study was to describe the parents and professionals perspective on barriers, facilitators and solutions that influence participation of children with disabilities in physical active play in playgrounds. With this information, intervention strategies can be developed to improve participation in the playground for this population.



12 semi-structured interviews with parents

5 focus groups with professionals (n=25)

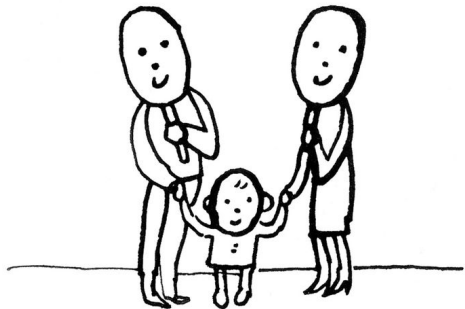
1 membercheck (n=7)

2 memberchecks (n=14)

Data analysis  
2 independent researchers  
Thematic inductive analysis  
Critical peer review

# Results

*"Yes... we were always here in the practice...Then I'd rather have that the therapist tells me there (in the playground)...what I can do with my daughter, or what I do is good.  
(parent)"*

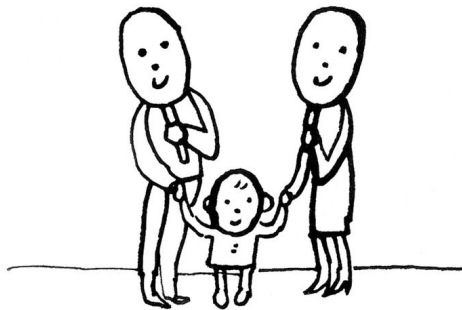


*"yes, I apply it in my therapy, when children have to learn something, then I use play as a method..... But how many times I was really focused if a child could play. Well, then that is pretty limited.  
(professional)"*



*"You often see that the child is able to do it physically, but that it is just really the connection between parents and child and being afraid that it is social incapable, rather than physically incapable to get there. Cannot keep up with the other children... also cannot handle conflicts. I think that is what parents encounter.  
(professional)"*

*“... he has hardly any connection [with peers].... Most children only see his wheelchair and ask me 'what is wrong with him' .... Than I think, you can also ask him.... Yes I find that really difficult....” (parent)*



*“... I think they really don't care...if there is either a swing, a seesaw or a jungle gym. It is more important that they are with children from the neighborhood...” (professional)*



*“I do not think it is possible to say that by tomorrow we make the playground this way, we take into account these conditions, we support the parents and 1.5 year later or 2 years later all children with disabilities play in a playground ... I believe take at least 10 years to trigger, the change for this to become normal. This is about behavioral change in my opinion, within families of children with disabilities... uh but also within the society to get everything accessible. (professional)”*

*“I think at first, when they are so young, they want their child to sit and walk. There are so many basic questions, that they only start thinking about play later on. (professional)”*





## Conclusion

**Social barrier bigger than physical barrier**  
**Community centered and multidisciplinary care**

**Empowerment of parents and child at a young age**

**Increased inclusion and acceptation of children with disabilities**

# Posters

## Let's play together!

The perspective of typically developing children on inclusive active play: A qualitative study.

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### Background

Outdoor play is the most important contributor to the total level of physical activity in children, and it contributes highly to their overall social and motor development.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the time children with a physical disability play outside is scarce. Recently, the perspectives of professionals and parents on inclusive active play has been analysed through qualitative studies. The results show that participation for children with physical disabilities is difficult because they experience an important social barrier.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Research purpose

To explore barriers, facilitators and solutions for inclusive active play at playgrounds from the perspective of typically developing Dutch children, aged 6-12 years.

### Barriers

- Personal factors:**
- Little knowledge regarding disabilities
  - No experience with inclusive play
  - Fear of hurting the feelings of a child with a disability
  - Difficulty of adjusting own play strategies

### Ideas about children with physical disabilities:

- Must have a low self-esteem
- Are bullied often
- Don't go outside very often

### Surroundings:

- Few (suitable) playgrounds
- Busy and unsafe neighbourhood
- Schools are not handicapped accessible

### Playgrounds:

- A slide is dangerous, and the stairs are unusable
- Not everyone can use the playground
- Children with a disability cannot adapt to velocity of ball- and running games

### Facilitators

- Personal factors:**
- Kids love to play together
  - The importance to involve everyone
  - Willingness to get used to inclusive play and offer help during play

### Ideas about children with physical disabilities:

- Are strong, cool and tough
- Are just like us
- Ask for help when needed

### Surroundings:

- Many playgrounds in the area
- Quiet neighbourhood in small towns
- Suitable schoolyards

### Playgrounds:

- Adjusting game rules and roles
- Accessible possibilities: a seesaw and a nestwing. And it's fun!
- Climbing, sliding and racing can be challenging for everyone

### Solutions

- Personal factors:**
- Children should gain more knowledge of physical disabilities
  - Children should gain more experience with inclusive active play

### Ideas about children with physical disabilities:

- Should try to go outside and show themselves in public more often
- Professionals should help them get more self-esteem

### Surroundings:

- Making neighbourhoods and schools accessible
- Go to school together as much as possible

### Playgrounds:

- Create equality at a playground
- Adapting playground equipment and the playground itself
- Playground equipment should be challenging and fun for everyone

"Children who already have experienced playing with children with physical disabilities can do this better and will adapt faster than others."

"Playing together is only fun, when it is fun for everyone!"

"I dislike to see people missing part of an arm or leg because you don't see that every day. But if someone came to my class who had that, I could get used to it, because he is just himself."

### References:

1. Nopri EL, Viskers CH, van Geelen SM, et al. Healthy play, better coping: The importance of play for the development of children in health and disease. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*. 2018; 96: 431-420.
2. van Engelen L, Boonzaaijer M, Ebbens M, van der Put L, Bloemen MAT. Barriers, facilitators and solutions for active inclusive play for children with a physical disability in the Netherlands: A qualitative study 2019.
3. NSO&K. De Speeltoerbondje. markt samen spelen mogelijk. 2015. [www.speeltoerbondje.nl](http://www.speeltoerbondje.nl)

### Conclusion

Children state that it is very important to get used to children with a physical disability. Familiarity with children with a physical disability improves inclusive active play. More (wheelchair) accessibility is needed in public. Children described that knowledge transfer by professionals may be an important solution.

## Playground arrangements for improving inclusive and physically active outdoor play: a qualitative study.

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### Background

Physical activity levels of typically developing children are already low, children with a physical disability are even less physically active than their typically developing peers. Playing outside is an important factor in improving physical activity.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately evidence shows that the time that children spent playing outside decreases. Children with physical disabilities experience a variety of barriers considering participation in outside active play.<sup>2</sup> Most playgrounds in the Netherlands are still not accessible for children with physical disabilities. In addition, if playgrounds are accessible for those children, they do not always stimulate inclusive physically active play.

### Purpose

To explore which playground arrangements can stimulate inclusive and physically active play.

### Results

This study identified six themes describing what the arrangement of a playground needs to ensure inclusive physically active outside play:

1. Variation and diversity
2. Challenging aspects
3. Attractive and inviting aspects
4. Creativity and fantasy
5. Safety and shelter
6. Accessibility

### Methods

- Design**
- Descriptive qualitative study

### Participants

- Views and experiences of parents from children with physical disabilities, of professionals working with children with disabilities and of designers and developers.

### Data collection

- Semi-structured interviews; 3 focus groups (n=17), 2 individual interviews
- Reassessing of 17 transcripts of a former study looking at facilitators and barriers for inclusive play<sup>3</sup>; 5 focus groups (n=25), 12 individual interviews.

### Data Analyses

- Verbatim transcription of the interviews
- Two independent researchers
- Thematic inductive analyses



Parent: "It is not necessary for my child to be able to use all the equipment of the playground, but he should be able to reach everything there is."



Professional: "I would like to see playgrounds to be more interactive, like using sand and water. That is where children play together and move one place to another."



Designer: "A hillside... that children in a wheelchair can ride down the hill and the other children can run down of it."

### Conclusion

The identified six themes provide a guideline for inclusive active outside play when developing or adjusting playgrounds. Professionals working in the field of pediatric rehabilitation should be aware of these guidelines so they can advise and support this development.

### References:

1. Broekmans K, Schelle AM, de Vries SB. The value of playground environments for children's physical activity level: a systematic review. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2014; 11(11):1059.
2. Moore A. Lynch M. Accessibility and usability of playground environments for children under 12: A scoping review. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 2019; 22: 331-344.
3. van Engelen L, Boonzaaijer M, Ebbens M, van der Put L, Bloemen MAT. Barriers, facilitators and solutions for active inclusive play for children with a physical disability in the Netherlands: A qualitative study 2019.

## Why do you play hide and seek? Barriers, facilitators and solutions for active inclusive play for children with a disability in the Netherlands: the professional's perspective. A qualitative study.

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### Introduction

Children with disabilities participate less in play<sup>1</sup> and experience multiple barriers regarding participation in playgrounds<sup>2</sup>. Improvement of the physical accessibility did not increase participation.

### Objective

Describe the professionals perspective on barriers, facilitators and solutions for active inclusive play for children with physical disabilities.

### Methods

**Participants**  
 \*\*Professionals working with children with disabilities (ie. pediatric physiotherapists, occupational therapists, personal care assistant, pedagogic, wheelchair skills trainer, organizer inclusive sports)

### Methods

#### Design

- Qualitative study
- 5 focusgroups with professionals (n=25)
- 2 memberchecks<sup>3</sup> (n=14)

#### Data analyses

- 2 independent researchers
- Thematic inductive analysis
- Critical peer review
- Physical activity for persons with disability model<sup>3</sup>



### Results

#### Emotional barrier

You often see that the child is able to do it physically, but that it is just really the connection between parents and child and being afraid that it is social incapable, rather than physically incapable to get there. Cannot keep up with the other children... also cannot handle conflicts. I think that is what parents encounter."

#### Start young

I think at first, when they are so young, they want their child to sit and walk. There are so many basic questions, that they only start thinking about play later on."



#### General inclusion and acceptance

"when you never see them, it never becomes normal and it then immediately feels strange when a child with a disability is there at a later age instead of being used to it because you grew up with it."

#### RoI of professional

"yes, I apply it in my therapy, when children have to learn something, then I use play as a method, what I do playfully. But how many times I was really focused if a child could play. Well, then that is pretty limited."

### Conclusion

The emotional barrier seems to be very important. Professionals must be aware of this and coach the child and parent from an early age on. Furthermore, play for children with disabilities is necessary and should be part of therapy. Several disciplines can and should take an active role in this.

### References:

1. Bialack Thomas K, Magner A, Lee M, Lech L. Determinants of Participation in Leisure Activities in Children and Youth with Cerebral Palsy: Systematic Review. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics*. 2020;15(15):159.
2. van Engelen L, Boonzaaijer M, Ebbens M, van der Put L, Bloemen MAT. Barriers, facilitators and solutions for active inclusive play for children with a physical disability in the Netherlands: A qualitative study 2019.
3. Ebbens M, van Engelen L, van der Put L, Bloemen MAT. Barriers, facilitators and solutions for active inclusive play for children with a physical disability in the Netherlands: A qualitative study 2019.

## Future research

- Perspective of children with disabilities
- Brainstorm session @ **INSPIRATION SESSION on saturday**

# Questions?

