Market Report
A Snapshot of your Market Sector

Children’s Play Area
This pack has been designed to provide information on setting up a business in the Children’s Play Area industry in Scotland, as well as helping to inform the market research section of your business plan. You can find more information on how to write a business plan from the Business Gateway website (www.bgateway.com/businessplan), including an interactive template and tips to get you started.

This market report was updated by Business Gateway in June 2019. If you find the information contained in this document useful, tell us about it! Send us feedback here; we will use your comments to help improve our service.

What do I need to know about the Children’s Play Area market?

The following summary statistics have been taken from market research reports and reliable resources that the Information Service uses to compile industry information. They should give you an indication of how your industry is faring at present and whether there is demand for your type of business:

♦ The indoor play market is a highly fragmented, fledgling industry. The first indoor play centre was built around 15 years ago and since then the industry has grown to well over 600 independently operated sites (The Play Providers Association, Industry Information) (tinyurl.com/y7cjrg2g).

♦ 49% of parents with younger children (11 or under) say they are spending more money on leisure activities than a year ago, compared to 31% of the total population (Mintel, Leisure Review – UK, December 2018).

♦ In terms of top priority [for public investment in sport], 37% of over-65s rated encouraging more children to play sport as of primary importance, as did 30% of people living in middle-income households (Mintel, Sports Participation – UK, September 2018).

♦ In 2017, it was estimated that 17% of Scotland’s population were aged 0-15 years old (National Records of Scotland, The Registrar General’s Annual Review of Demographic Trends) (tinyurl.com/y6zq34ny).

♦ In 2018, over 50 individuals and organisations signed up to a National Position Statement to make playing and learning outdoors an everyday activity for Scotland’s children and young people. The statement asserts the health, wellbeing and educational benefits of playing and learning outdoors and commits signatories to help widen access to natural and communal spaces and to enriching urban spaces for children and families to play in (Early Years Scotland, Scotland commits to life-enhancing outdoor play, October 2018) (tinyurl.com/y6jedhnd).

♦ The national organisation for this industry is Play Scotland. Other industry bodies include Play England, Youth Scotland, the Association of Play Industries, the Play Providers Association and the Federation of the European Play Industry.
Where can I find more information on my market?

The Information Service has access to a number of databases which can offer more detail on this industry. Some of these reports are listed below - if you would like to be sent extracts from any of these reports, please contact us on 0300 013 4753 or email info@bgateway.com.

♦ **Mintel – Leisure Review – UK (December 2018).** Parents are in search of new activities for their children and prefer spending their money on such. Operators need to ensure that they are regularly innovating and revamping their offering if they’re to continue to appeal to parents as well as the children. Activities that involve children being active and pull them away from devices are likely to resonate well with parents.

♦ **Mintel – Marketing to Parents – UK (October 2018).** The proportion of parents of working age who are in employment has soared in recent years, with figures for April-June 2017 now eclipsing those seen before the 2008 financial downturn. Accordingly, products and services that not only illustrate how they can save money for the household, but also that promote the time-saving convenience they offer, are likely to hold appeal for busy parents looking to balance a career with raising a family.

There are also a number of online resources you may find helpful:

♦ **The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)** has published advice on indoor soft play and fully enclosed play equipment, including legislative standards and guidelines on setting up the play space (tinyurl.com/y39t5php).

♦ **The Indoor Play Magazine** has a guide to setting up an indoor play centre with information on choosing a location, finding funding, and designing your centre (tinyurl.com/y69wwyq7).

♦ **The Association of Play Industries (API)** has a number of useful publications, including research papers on children’s activity, codes of practice and a directory of current API members (tinyurl.com/y5xgkntk).

♦ **The Scottish Government** - in partnership with Inspiring Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and Smarter Scotland - have a downloadable document on *Practical guidance for creating outdoor play experiences in early learning and childcare* (December, 2018) (tinyurl.com/y44u6lrd).

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How can I find out about my competitors?

Business Gateway’s online guide to Competitor Analysis explains how to find your competitors, how to research what they’re doing and how to act on what you learn about them.

Immediate competition will be from other businesses in your local area. There are several online directories which can be used to find company information and generate lists easily and at no expense. Many Local Authorities also publish local business directories on the web. Below are some key web resources:

♦ General business directories such as Yell, Thomson Local or Google Maps
♦ Trade specialists like EuroPages (European directory), The Wholesaler or Free Index
♦ Business to business (B2B) specialists such as Kompass

Likewise, your local Chamber of Commerce may publish a members’ directory; find your local Chamber on the Scottish Chambers website.

Once you’ve identified who your competitors are, the next step is to gather information on the way they do business. Which services do they provide? How do they market themselves? How much do they charge?

To learn about your competitors:

♦ Look for articles or adverts in local newspapers, trade press and directories.
♦ Try to read their marketing material; if the company has an online presence, visit the company’s website as a first port of call. Not only does it give you a better understanding of the company’s activities, it can also offer a wealth of information such as a company history or staff biographies, as well as the company’s partners or suppliers
♦ Search for information on limited UK companies via the Companies House website
♦ Gain an insight into your competitor’s performance using credit checks and the accounts that limited companies are required to submit to Companies House each year.

We can provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using this resource, or looking for us to help you find relevant publications, please contact us by emailing info@bgateway.com or by calling 0300 013 4753
What about suppliers?

*Choosing and Managing Suppliers* can help you decide what you need from a supplier, how to identify one and how to choose one to deal with.

Trade associations or industry specific organisations may also be able to recommend suppliers or contacts. You can also use the aforementioned resources for finding competitors to find suppliers.

Once you have decided on a supplier, we can run a credit check on the company to help assess their financial stability. We provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using the resource please info@bgateway.com or by calling 0300 013 4753.

Who are my customers?

Your business plan should include information about the customers you would expect. Business Gateway’s guides on *Retaining and Grow Your Customer Base* will help you to identify who your customers are, how to use this information to sell more effectively and how to actively compete in your marketplace.

It can be useful to group your customers by geographical location, age or lifestyle. The websites listed below are freely available and can provide most of this information. If you can’t find what you’re looking for from these website, please contact us and one of the team will be happy to help:

- Access the latest population estimates from the [National Records of Scotland (NRS)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk). NRS also offers demographic factsheets for each council area in Scotland, which can provide summary statistics for the area you will be based in.
- Information from the most recent census in 2011 is released via the official website. See in particular the [Census Area Profiles](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk). Clicking on your area of interest will give the latest population figures, including estimates by age.
- [Understanding Scottish Places](https://www.understandingscotland.com) has interactive profiles of towns and cities across Scotland. It can be useful for understanding the interrelationships and flows between towns, and also gives comparisons between two or more places.
- [Scottish Government Statistics](https://www.gov.scot) provide accurate and up-to-date statistics on Scotland, covering population, health, education and housing.
- [The Scottish Household Survey](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk) provides information on the structure, characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of Scottish households, both at a national and local level.
- [Office for National Statistics (ONS)](https://www.ons.gov.uk) is the recognised national statistical body for the UK. ONS covers a wide range of demographic, economic and social issues at a UK level.
How can you help me with other aspects of starting my business?

The Business Gateway website has guides, videos, online tutorials and tips on all aspects of starting up a business in Scotland. Follow the links below to explore each resource:

**Accountancy**
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland’s (ICAS) “Find a Chartered Accountant” tool

**Pricing**
Business Companion [Pricing & payment guide](#).

*Please note:* the most effective way to research pricing is to conduct your own research – visit wholesalers or suppliers to obtain price lists, find quotes from similar companies and work out what other businesses in your area are charging.

**Funding**
Practical information on finance and funding for starting and growing your business

**Insurance**
Business insurance guide

**Legal Help**
Gov.uk “Licence Finder” tool
Law Society of Scotland’s “Find a Solicitor” tool

**Promotion**
BG guides to Marketing

**Training**
Skills Development Scotland’s My World of Work
Funding for training
Small Business Bonus Scheme (Scotland)

Your local Business Gateway can offer events, workshops and 1:2:1 support on all aspects of starting and developing your business. Call the helpline on **0300 013 4753** to find out what is available in your area.

We hope you find this Market Report useful and we’d love to hear your feedback [here](#).

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