

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT

YOUTH & PLAY SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE 27 OCTOBER 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

BIG LOTTERY CHILDREN'S PLAY PROGRAMME REPORT 2009

Executive Summary

This report is to update the Committee about the developments of the Big Lottery Play Programme. The Committee is asked to note the report.

1.0. Background

1.1. The BIG Lottery Fund awarded Youth & Play Service £881,208 for the children programme over three years, 2009 to 2012. The grant funds a portfolio of seven projects; three revenue and four capital.

1.2. The three revenue projects are:

- Community Play Rangers – Facilitating and promoting accessible outdoor play for children 5 -13 years
- Play Practitioners Project - open access play sessions
- Play For All – inclusive play project

1.3 Capital projects are for improved Adventure and Nature play areas in:

- Meols Park
- Harrison Park, New Brighton
- Port Causeway, Port Sunlight
- Whitfield Common, Heswall

1.4 The revenue projects created three new senior play workers and 12 new part time posts. All staffs are in post except the Play Inclusion Co-ordinator which is in the process of recruitment. The Community Play Rangers and Play Practitioners Projects started delivering in March 2009 and the 'Play For All' Inclusive project have been supporting the children in full time playschemes since July 2009. There are a number of portfolio outcomes expected to be achieved by the end of the grant period these can be found attached, see Appendix 1.

2.0. **Community Play Rangers**

- 2.1. The Community Play Rangers Project started in February 2009. One full-time Senior Community Play Ranger was appointed and seven part-time Community Play Rangers. The playworkers completed one month training before being split into three teams to be able to designated communities, in order to provide play sessions for children. Areas were identified by consulting with children, other projects run by the Wirral Play Council, Schools, Friends of the Parks groups, the extended services co-ordinators, local community groups and various Wirral Council departments to find out what play provision there was available for children aged 5 – 13 across Wirral. A programme was developed based on the areas which had been identified as having gaps in free play provision and now 30 play sessions operate in parks and play areas each week.
- 2.2. Children at each play session choose for themselves what type of activity they would like to take part in. The Play Rangers provide different types of equipment and ideas that can be used in many ways. The children are encouraged to make games up, suggest new activities that could take place and make things that can then be taken home. All activities are free of charge and are a mixture of sports, arts and crafts, natural play, in particular the Gibbon slack lines, which support more risky play, have proved popular. Funding for new equipment is being looked into to be able to offer children various new types of activities and provide different types of play opportunities.
- 2.3. Delivery Areas include:
Irby Playing Fields, Ridgewood Park - Pensby, Grange & Newton Park - West Kirby, Ryecroft Park, Demesne Street , Luke St. play area - Seacombe, Central Park- Liscard, Harrison Park, Wallacre play area , Tower Grounds, Vale Park- New Brighton & Wallasey, Prenton Dell Estate, Town Lane & Mayer Park -Bebington, Port Causeway - New Ferry, Mersey Park – Tranmere, Bedford Road – Rock Ferry, Yee Tree play area and Lingham Park – Moreton, Kellsall play area, Eastham skate park – Eastham, Brookhurst park and Bromborough recreation ground, Meadow Crescent, Woodchurch – Coronation park – Greasby, Meols Park, Grove Road – Hoylake, Whitfield Common and the Puddydale, Heswall.
- 2.4. During the Community Play Ranger play sessions the Play Rangers are often approached by parents, adults, children and young people telling them that they think the Play Rangers are doing a fantastic job and are “well needed” in their area. One adult approached a worker to tell them they had some trouble with children by their houses and were glad the Play Rangers had moved them away into the park.

- 2.5. During one play session children took the Play Rangers into their confidence and showed them a den, which they had built in a local woodland area. This could not be seen from the park but the children were extremely proud of their den and had thought of everything, they had a rope to help people get in as it was on a steep slope, they had carpet to sit on and was totally camouflaged by trees and dead branches. They had worked very hard on this and the Play Rangers had to promise they would not have it removed. At the same play session Play Rangers have watched as older youths have slowly started joining in with play sessions, which the Play Rangers encourage as then children see that they can play together with older youths and not fear all of them. These children continued to play with the youths after the play session ends,
- 2.6. There are two play sessions attended that have an older youths at each who are known for causing trouble on their estate. The Play Rangers have been able to build up a good relationship with these youths and they have both taken part in play sessions and one of them even participated in using the dressing up equipment during the session. This was extremely funny for all the children and the Play Rangers. By allowing the youths to join in helps to avoid any problems they may cause otherwise.
- 2.7. Meols park play session has been a huge success. Friends of the Park have helped the Play Rangers promote their play session and have an active approach and this may be our pilot session were volunteers can take over to provide their own play session with our help providing training.
- 2.8. The Play Rangers watch children grow at every session, one child was very shy at first and his parents informed the Play Ranger that he has started doing better at school and takes part in more activities since coming to the play sessions with his friends. One child has written to the Chief Executive of Wirral Council to tell them how much they enjoy the play session in Hoylake and how she has persuaded many of her friends to come to the play session. Many children and young people return to the play sessions week after week, some even follow the Play Rangers from one session to another.
- 3.0. **Play Practitioners Project**
- 3.1. The project is staffed by a full-time Senior Play Practitioner and two part time playworkers. It delivers free open access play for all children aged between 6 – 13 yr olds in targeted locations on the Wirral, including Overchurch, Noctorum, Woodchurch, Eastham and New Ferry. The play staff have built up a good rapport with the children and parents who attend the sessions. Playworkers have an idea book for each location, the

children can then draw or just write what they would like to do the next week and where possible we bring the activity is planned and prepared.

- 3.2. This summer the project was promoted in the Let's Go Magazine and through contacting and leafleting local schools. The senior worker attends local residents meetings and is involved in local fund raising events including 'The Big Lunch' at the Woodchurch Community Centre. Play Day at Birkenhead Park on the 6 August was also a great opportunity to promote Playpoint to over 1000 children and their parents.
- 3.3 All staff have completed their First Aid Training and training needs are identified through team meetings and staff appraisals. The project plans to continue to promote PlayPoint through area discussions with children/young people, parents/carers and other outside agencies so they meet the needs of local children and the community. Parental involvement is encouraged as is the recruitment and training of volunteers.
- 3.4. Two little girls who are very shy, asked if they could perform a Penguin song. When they finished playworkers suggested they might like to perform for the whole group next week. They agreed, and playworkers obtained some penguin outfits for them. They performed their show in front of all the children and some parents. This was a great success, and their parents couldn't believe how good they were. Playworkers have watched how their confidence has grown and look forward to their next performance.
- 3.5. One young boy came to his first play session with his father, but he was so upset he wouldn't let go of his dad and cried to go home. Shortly after he came back with his mum and she asked if she could stay till he settled, within 20 minutes he was playing with his new friends and his mum went home. When she returned he didn't want to leave. He had drawn a picture for his dad which said "ha ha I went back". He now comes every week and brings his cousin.
- 3.6. One of the most recent purchases is a Gibbon Slackline. It is attached between two trees like a tight rope, at a low level. This provides children with an opportunity for risky play. It is also timed to see how long they can balance or tightrope walk along the line. The current record is 57 seconds, this adds a slight competitive edge to the activity.
- 3.7. The Play Rangers project and Play Practitioners project contribute to a number of objectives within the Play Strategy Objectives, these are attached, see Appendix 1.

4.0. **Play For All**

- 4.1. An inclusive play project 'Play For All' focuses on engaging with and providing free play opportunities for vulnerable children and young people aged 5 - 13 years. The project reduces barriers to play for children and young people with specific needs and provide access to local play opportunities in an inclusive play environment.
- 4.2. Playworkers provide age appropriate play opportunities in consultation with the children and young people aimed at supporting their play needs, promoting optimal social and emotional development, maximum participation and fun. Playworkers will utilise their observational and reflective play work skills to determine levels of appropriate support and intervention. Some children with specific needs are excluded from ordinary social group activities, due to accessibility, locality, transport and resources issues. The deployment of playworkers with required skills help to address this, and provide a structure in which children with specific needs can engage in free play on a regular basis.
- 4.3. Children go to their local play setting to access indoor and outdoor play encouraging children to access local play provision, so that they can engage with their peers in an inclusive play environment. Open access play provision is inherently flexible and the inclusive nature of the schemes means issues emanating from social exclusion can be addressed. This would also mean working with parents, foster carers, support groups, schools, Children's Services to ensure a co-ordinated approach when delivering the service.
- 4.4. Children with specific needs cited the 'need for supervision', before their parents would allow them to play out or use local play facilities. These children would be escorted to activities in centralised locations, outside of their local area, meaning the potential of making and engaging with their friends locally was very limited. This would only serve to increase their isolation and the opportunity to engage with their peers other than school. Therefore the projects fits with the key finding to increased accessibility to free localised inclusive play provision for vulnerable children and young people who have specific needs supported by supervised trained playworkers.
- 4.5. Three Inclusive Playworkers have been appointed engaged in direct face to face play work. There has been some difficulties in recruiting Senior Play worker to coordinate the project, however, this will hopefully be addressed in the next round of interviews. Playworkers will receive relevant training which will help to meet the children's needs and support their attendance. Models of good practice will be developed in the

delivery of inclusive play which will be accessible, offer equality of opportunity, enable children to participate and be child-centred.

5.0. Birkenhead Park Launch Day

5.1. The Programme was launched on 19th August at the Birkenhead Park Pavilion. The day was a success with in excess of 200 children and parents/grandparents/carers attending the event. The programme was officially opened by the Mayor and Mayoress. Cllr Chris Meaden and the Acting Deputy Head Youth & Play Service promoted the Play programme on Radio Merseyside raising the profile of Play.

5.2. The day started with introduction of the programme by Cllr Meaden. This was followed by a presentation of the programme progress and the Play co-ordinators gave a summary and insights of their projects. The Mayor appreciated the importance of play to children development and congratulated the successful bid of the Big Lottery funding. Both play projects ran their sessions, activities including badge making, paper dresses, kite making, alternative sports (Gibbon Slackline) and den building.

6.0. Financial and Staffing Implications

6.1 The Children's play programme is funded by the BIG Lottery Fund and due to finish February 2012. There is an additional 16 play staff employed who will provide additional play provision across Wirral.

7.0. Equal Opportunities Implications

7.1 The programme reflects inclusiveness and promotes equal opportunities and access.

8.0. Human Rights Implications

8.1. There are no specific human rights implications arising from this report.

9.0. Community Safety Implications

9.1. There are no specific community safety implications none arising from this report.

10.0. Local Agenda 21 Implications

10.1 There are no specific Local Agenda 21 Implications arising from this report.

11.0. Planning Implications

11.1. There are none arising from this report.

12.0. Anti - poverty Implications

12.1. The play provision provided is free of charge for all children with a high density of play activity in areas of identified need.

13.0. Social inclusion Implications

13.1 The programme endeavours to ensure children have equal access to play and are able to participate in local play opportunities.
The play projects are open access and often work with those children and young people who are marginalised.

14.0. Local Member Support Implications

14.1. Play provision is distributed borough-wide through all wards of Wirral.

15.0. Background papers

15.1. There are none arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to note this report.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services

Appendix 1

Portfolio Outcomes

Number	Portfolio Outcome	Project Contribution to Outcome over 3 years	Project Target achieved Qtr 1 & 2 of First Year
1	4,700 children & YP able to participate in a range of more inclusive and accessible play experiences in areas of identified need by the end of three years.	Community Play Rangers Target –3500 Play Practitioners Project Target – 900 Play for All Target – 300	Community Play Rangers :1357 Play Practitioners Project : 498 Play for All : TBA
2	Enable 20% more children & YP to feel safe and reduce the fear of playing beyond the confines of their home environment by the end of three years.	Community Play Rangers Target –700 Play Practitioners Project Target – 180 Play for All Target – 60	Feel Safe Survey conducted at the beginning of projects, same children will be surveyed again at the end of year 1.
3	200 more children & YP will be involved in the design, planning and delivery of play provision which will increase satisfaction and meet their play needs by the end of three years.	Community Play Rangers Target –150 Play Practitioners Project Target – 38 Play for All Target – 12	Collectively over 1000 children have participated in the consultation of play areas and activities to be delivered by the projects.

Play Strategy Objectives

1.10 Support the continued development of supervised open access play provision

1.10.3 Development and delivery of outreach play provision in areas with inadequate provision

All Community Play Ranger play sessions are supervised and open access. They have been chosen after consultation with relevant agencies and are in areas identified as having inadequate play provision.

1.15 Enable children and young people to feel safe when playing beyond the confines of their home environment i.e. parks and open spaces

1.15.1 Provide children and young people with opportunities for informal supervised play activities with the support of qualified play rangers

Children and young people are supervised at all times during play sessions and they are free to choose their own activities. They have completed the Feel Safe questionnaires as baseline data to find out how safe they feel whilst playing out and this will be monitored and completed again in six months to see if the Play Rangers are making a difference.

Play practitioners contributed in collecting the base line data for the Feel Safe Questionnaires. Children and young people were consulted in focus groups at play sessions.

4.3.2 Provide play development support within the current district and area structure via Play Practitioners.

5 free indoor play locations across Wirral operating 3.30pm – 6.00pm every week day.

5.1 Provide opportunities for children and young people to be involved and consulted in the development and delivery of play provision

5.1.3 Support children and young people's involvement in design and delivery of improved play areas