

CHILDREN'S PLAY INITIATIVE

Good Practice Case Studies

Sustainability

North West Leicestershire (NWL) District Council

Project description

The portfolio will provide new, innovative ways to promote and develop strong communities through play. It aims to offer children aged 0-19 years, their parents, carers and families the chance to access and enjoy good quality, local play opportunities promoting choice and inclusion. The portfolio covers provision for children across all ages, backgrounds and with wide ranging needs and competences. The portfolio covers three main projects areas, which will ensure a varied mix of activities and facilities across the district. This will include; skate areas sports courts, meeting points, creative play through a variety of settings including outreach toy library service, play workers and youth shelters.

Grant- £199,820

This is a good example of how the play strategy demonstrates a good marketing strategy and a commitment to sustainability.

Marketing of the play scheme

The authority has good plans to market the portfolio to make sure potential beneficiaries will know about it. The authority will use the NWL Play Forum to carry out the marketing due to its excellent links with the local community. This will be done through the, authority website, posters in local establishments, the monthly 'vision' magazine and NWL Play Newsletter which is delivered to residents in the area. The local media will also release press articles in local newspapers and grand opening events are planned for the projects. The portfolio of services will be accessible to all potential beneficiaries and free of charge.

Sustainability

The children's play demonstrates a commitment to sustainability. This is demonstrated through the projects, which have been developed to ensure that they are either self-sustainable or have clear routes where funding can be levered in. Furthermore, the council during the time of the portfolio, to build stronger links with local community and voluntary sector organisations, in

order for them to take on the day to day running of the supervised play and fixed play provision once the portfolio projects end. On going support will be provided to these groups through the Childcare and Education Service department in order to up-skill and assist them in accessing external funding to support local play initiatives.

In addition, each year the NWL Play Forum will hold a workshop where local and national funding bodies are invited to talk through the process of securing funding for children's play provision.

Adur District Council (ADC)

Project description

Adur District Council want to increase open space play facilities for children and young people who currently have little or no provision in the area. There are two projects- one is for new play equipment and the other for multi use skateboarding and BMX ramps. The two projects will help provide much needed facilities for the most deprived areas of Adur. They will be fully available to all children and will be inclusive to those who have disabilities so that all the children can play and interact together.

Grant- £200,000

This is a good example of how the local authority will ensure sustainability through their council budget.

ADC has taken all capital costs into consideration within the bid to ensure sustainability of the portfolio. The authority will absorb the revenue and management costs of the portfolio in their own budget.

The authority is also committed to consultation on a continued basis to ensure that the needs of the beneficiaries are being met and regular use of play provision. They have a very strong community involvement in the delivery of the projects to ensure that it is well looked after and developed in the future.

Torbay Council

Project description

The portfolio of eight projects will provide a range of activities and facilities involving more challenging play, the development of teenage facilities, better provision in deprived wards and better access to safe, supervised play. Projects include play sessions in natural spaces, adventurous activities, fun days and supervised skate sessions.

Grant- £624,521

The play strategy has an extensive definition of children's play, with subsequent expansion of the benefits of play. These benefits are then placed in a context of linkages with other strategies and initiatives e.g. UN Convention on the rights of the child, Every Child Matters and Planning Policy Guidance 17.

Torbay's play strategy covers the period 2005 to 2010 and forms part of the local community plan and cultural strategy. Detailed consultation was undertaken with children, parents and a range of stakeholders and play practitioners. Children were involved through questionnaires completed at fun days and local events and a smaller group was involved in testing best practice play facilities across the South West.

The main concerns identified through consultation were children's anxiety regarding bullying and a lack of holiday provision. Being a popular holiday destination, the area's child population doubles during the summer holidays and local children are often unable to afford to undertake the types of interesting activities available to paying visitors. Children also indicated that they were not very interested in fixed play equipment but more so in activities and natural environments for play.

Brighton and Hove City Council

Portfolio description

The portfolio consists of five projects. This includes a project to create a new inclusive play space for the local community in a ward where no outside play facilities currently exist. The four other projects of the portfolio include mobile play project that will develop a programme of play activity in areas where there is currently no play provision and three play activity projects in deprived areas of Brighton and Hove.

Grant- £685,245

The play strategy provides a comprehensive overview of the principles of inclusion and equality. The strategy does not just focus on disabilities, but looks at other barriers to inclusion.

The strong emphasis on inclusion has resulted in the authority seeking expressions of interest from those organisations working in areas that fall within the 30% most deprived areas according to the overall index of multiple deprivation 2004. Each of the projects will be accessible to children and young people with disabilities and one particular project in the portfolio 'play area in Ovingdean' will be inclusive for those with physical and mental impairments. Ovingdean is a large village with no play area, no public open space nor public play equipment where children can congregate and meet other children. The Play Area will enable local children as well as children with physical, mental and sensory difficulties who attend schools locally to take part in a range of inclusive and accessible play activities.

For this project, the delivery organization, which is a voluntary and community group, will be working with a play equipment company Kompan who have won awards for inclusive and accessible play designs from the Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied Association.

Mid Sussex District Council

Project description

The portfolio is to promote the value and benefits of play in Mid Sussex. This will be achieved through the improvement of existing play provision and the development of new play provision, using examples of good practice and applying approved standards. The portfolio will address recognised community issues such as anti-social behavior, a lack of provision in deprived areas and developing innovative play opportunities, which are unique in Mid Sussex. The portfolio is designed to incorporate opportunities for children with disabilities and to be sensitive to their needs.

Grant- £216,270

This project is a good example of how robust consultation was carried out with a range of stakeholders including children and young people and play strategy links with 'Every Child Matters'.

The play strategy developed by the local authority covers many of the key principles covered in the 'Planning for Play' guidance. Consultation has taken place in developing the children's play strategy. This is demonstrated by the authority recognizing one of the key principles to the successful development of a strategy, was to consult with children, young people and the wider community to understand their needs.

Consultation was carried out through face-to-face meetings and workshops. Focus groups and workshops were also undertaken with key stakeholders in Mid Sussex. The consultation focused on children and young people from a wide range of backgrounds and was designed in such a way that it was free from bias. The authority has demonstrated an understanding of existing children's play provision and how the portfolio will fill gaps or add value. This is demonstrated through the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17 audit mapping, which highlighted the locations of all play provision across the borough. This enabled the authority to identify areas where play provision was most in need.

Blackpool Borough Council (BBC)

Project description

Blackpool's Children's Play Portfolio consists of projects that have been identified as high priority in the recently developed Blackpool Children's play Strategy. Four of the five projects will create new play facilities for children and young people in Blackpool and one will employ a play ranger who will work on the sites to develop opportunities for children and young people to play. The projects have been identified through a needs analysis process and the Children's Play Programme funding is to be allocated within the 3% most deprived areas within the town. The Blackpool Children's Play Strategy aims 'to develop high quality, fully inclusive and accessible play provision for the children and young people of Blackpool' and the play portfolio significantly contributes to achieving this goal. Extensive consultation has taken place within the town which has highlighted the need to create high quality play opportunities and play spaces for children and young people, in particular - 'things to do and places to go' and the portfolio will develop such opportunities.

Grant- £377,305

BBC has identified sufficient resources to manage the portfolio through the steering groups and through the department as a whole being involved in the delivery. There is also a strong senior level support for the portfolio.

The projects will be monitored through a self-evaluation process, which includes baseline and annual user surveys, case studies, focus groups, measurements against key performance indicators, overview and scrutiny committees, Children's Trust Board meetings and a performance management software system. The project steering group leads will collect information for the portfolio manager (in the portfolio steering group) to collate, and these reports will be analysed by the Children's Trust Board, part of BBC. There will be regular financial reporting carried out between the project manager, the contractor (in the capital projects) and BBC's accountant for the department. The procurement processes for capital works will ensure the budgets are spent as intended by ensuring a clear project brief.

A representative from BBC will take on the role of project lead within each project steering group. This lead will ensure good communication between the portfolio managers and the project steering groups through regular meetings and reports. BBC has identified potential risks to the portfolio and has shown an awareness of how to manage these risks.

Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Portfolio description

The portfolio is to develop play provision in the three wards of the borough, which suffer from high deprivation. There will be two elements to the portfolio. The first element will provide fixed play areas across eight sites, which are in most need across the three identified wards. The second part of the portfolio is to deliver a mobile play scheme operating across the three wards to deliver free, self-directed open space play activities.

Grant- £694,606

Equality

The local authority shows commitment to all of BIG equality principles.

This is demonstrated through the portfolio promoting accessibility and participation by creating play provision in the areas of most need. Equal opportunities will be promoted through the open recruitment of posts required to deliver the portfolio and all the services being offered to all children. The portfolio also demonstrates the promotion of inclusive communities and reduction of disadvantage and exclusion through providing play provision in areas, which contain high numbers of children and young people from refugee, and asylum communities who presently experience barriers to play.

Furthermore, the local authority will ensure all organisations delivering the individual projects will meet equality principles. This is demonstrated by all organisations having to meet or adhere to the council's rigorous equal opportunities policy, which falls in line with BIG's equality principles.

Evaluation

The local authority has plans to evaluate the success of the portfolio. This is demonstrated through monitoring and evaluation reports assessing the impacts of the individual projects, which will be carried out on a bi-monthly basis. This will involve quantitative measures including numbers of children accessing the new play provision in relation to age ranges and ethnic backgrounds. Qualitative measures will include feedback sessions throughout the life of the projects involving parents, carers, volunteers, children and young people to discuss success of the individual projects and the portfolio as a whole.

Sustainability

The children's play strategy demonstrates a commitment to sustainability. This is demonstrated through the council aiming to build stronger links with local community and voluntary sector organisations in order to take on the day-to-

day running of the supervised play and fixed play provision once the portfolio projects end. On going support will be provided to these groups by Bolton Council Voluntary Service department in order to up skill and assist them in accessing external funding to support local play initiatives.

Partnership Working

The local authority engages well with the communities it serves. This is demonstrated through the extensive consultation it conducted with various groups across the borough including Connexions, Youth Offending Team, Sure Start, Sports Development, Children's Centres and Bolton at Home. These organisations all represent the children and young people of Bolton. The local authority has appropriate contacts and networks that will enable it to involve stakeholders and deliver the portfolio effectively. This is demonstrated through the strong internal networking of various council departments. In addition the council have their own specialist play installation team and have strong networks with external play installation contractors.

Playful Ideas

Innovation

Project Buzz

Project description

This is a project to provide out of school activities for the local community. This project will work with local authorities on play implementation and strategies, raising awareness and promoting standards of play. The project currently supports approx 150 children per year from multiethnic and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. This project provides a variety of play opportunities and clubs after school and supports the local community throughout holiday periods in the form of international evenings to aid community cohesion, sports and health opportunities and trips to local areas to promote outdoor play. Services provided will be increased in response to results obtained via consultation with the local community.

Grant- £235,918

The project is both innovative in its concept and reaching out to 'previously excluded' beneficiary group.

Many children in the project area come from small pockets of ethnic minority communities who do not have access to 'free play' opportunities. Many aspects of the project use the natural environment to engage in play as requested by the children through consultation such as den building and making tents out of natural materials.

From the consultation Project Buzz also intend to set up a penpal 'play pal' club with a charity called Tenteleni, who work with primary schools in sub-Saharan Africa. The children would have penpals and swap play ideas between each other so that they could be replicated. The project managers would also work with Tenteleni staff to swap and disseminate their findings. Children from both projects are from deprived backgrounds and are limited with play resources at home. Through the project they will be able to chat, swap ideas and be long distant 'play mates'. Children would benefit from learning about other cultures and their approach to play in hands on fun way.

Project Buzz has identified a problem in the lack of play ethnic minority and refugee children partake in. They have identified that these communities feel isolated and excluded and their children are suffering as a result of a lack of play opportunities. Therefore, the project intends to encourage these children to the centre and allow them the opportunity to explore their imaginations and creativity through child-led play sessions. Part of the project will be to establish Children Representatives, older children who will take responsibility for leading play sessions with younger children. It is hoped that this will feed back to the parents of ethnic minority and refugee families to encourage them to get involved in play with their children.

Innovation

Bradford Community Environment Project

Project description

This project over three years will involve a team of play workers visiting local parks, green spaces and woodlands to facilitate play with children. The play workers will hand down skills in den-building and rope swings that were traditionally handed down from older children to younger children but with fears of 'stranger danger' these skills are being lost. The play opportunities provided will be free and open, giving children independence and choice. The project will be mobile, going to where the children are. They will also access children in community groups, play schemes and after school groups as well as families and create new groups where need.

Grant- £228,934

This is a good example of addressing 'stranger danger' issues.

Although the project is not an entirely new concept in the field of children's play, the need identified in the consultation found that children no longer

played in woodlands and open areas like previous generations due to fears of 'stranger danger' and the perception of such areas as dirty. The project offers free, natural play experiences that are local to children and new within the context of the local area.

The use of Play Workers would address these concerns and lead children to play as previous generations did and lead to decreased parental anxiety about letting their children go out to play.