

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Early Years, Children & Youth Policy Development Overview & Scrutiny
MEETING DATE:	9 th July 2012
TITLE:	Play Service Briefing
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 This is a briefing for Members on the current activities, issues and future pressures for Play Services in the Council.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Early Years, Children & Youth Policy Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

2.1 Accept the briefing within this paper as an overview of the current position for Play.

2.2 To note the progress, re-prioritisation and re-shaping of commissioned services since the Play Services were cut in 2010-11 to be preventative and enabling services.

2.3 To note the contribution Play Services play in supporting schools with children's physical and emotional health and well-being.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 This report does not contain any direct financial implications, however as part of the Council's drive to reduce costs over the next 3 years, there are financial implications for these services and some reference to finances is made within the report.

3.2 Total funding allocated to Play services is £483,494, of which £422,954 comes from sources other than Children's Services. Any issues identified in this report will not impact upon the budget position.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 In the 2010-11 budgets for play we were profiled to spend £538,739 for the year, covering the play contracts, work with disabled children, training and the continuation of the Play Pathfinder project. When the new administration came in Play Pathfinder was cut immediately by £75k in-year. Since then the budget has dropped, although through other new sources of short-term revenue for disabled children and health funding, the budget is now £484,000. Some of these funding streams will be ending in March 2013. The voluntary sector receives £347,520 in

commissioned contracts with the local authority. These contracts expire in 2014. The remaining funding supports Wheels for All (adapted bikes for children with disabilities) and a staffing of the team (3.6 FTE posts).

4.2 When funding reduced in the Play sector the Play Service and the PCT, alongside established play providers such as Bath Area Play Project and Wandsdyke Play Association, began discussions about how we could re-shape services to recognise the role play increasingly manifested itself in:

- (1) Supporting isolated and vulnerable disabled children to access free play
- (2) Supporting children to be more active
- (3) Supporting schools to manage behaviour in playgrounds
- (4) Understanding the role play workers play in reaching isolated families to become more involved in their local play areas

4.3 Commissioned services since 2011 have been re-shaped to take into account the learning Bath & North East Somerset has had through its voluntary sector partners. The Council continues to be recognised nationally as an innovator and at a recent London conference a joint PCT/Council presentation on the importance of play for positive health outcomes, showed us to be innovative and cutting edge.

4.4 The key elements and outcomes of the new services are:

- (1) 2 Family Play Inclusion Workers (one in BAPP one in WPA), working in targeted areas across the authority to engage isolated or disabled children in open access play. **Outcomes:** 146 children reached in the first year (against a target of 60). Children who feel isolated by conditions such as ASD, now are supported to access play. Children, whose parents are suffering from poor mental or physical health, are often totally isolated in their own homes, are now supported to play. Small bespoke group work is done with children and parents together in open spaces, in an inclusive way, giving parent's confidence for children to play out. More able children (physically and emotionally) are supported to attend local Community Play Ranger services. The FPIWorkers act as advocates for children between school and home. The demand for this highly effective service in the community is shown by the range of referrals that come into the service from schools, school nurses, Parent Support Advisers, Social Workers. The noted gap is a similar service for children over 13 years. There is an increasing waiting list for the service which could be met with additional capacity.
- (2) The long established Community Play Rangers continue to operate in targeted areas, giving confidence to children and communities that 'playing out' is safe when they are there. These services work in partnership with schools to develop and use play as a catalyst resulting in improved behaviour and increases in self-esteem, supporting social and emotional learning and participation. The Community Play Rangers support children and parents to take risks and to learn through social skills through play at parks in communities.
- (3) Community Play Services through BAPP and WPA, work in targeted geographical areas to build community capacity in local areas by supporting parents/carers to set up their own play activities and then move on to a new area. **Outcomes** a number of small community initiatives are beginning to be established across the authority. BAPP have set up the Weston Play Partnership which is now fully constituted and has 5 parents involved. Other models are developing in Keynsham.

- (4) There continue to be some holiday activities, particularly for disabled children but cut backs mean that the range and number of sessions has been cut.
- (5) OPAL (Outside Play and Learning) is a project offered to schools to support good quality, collaborative play during play times. It is a whole school approach, leading to an accredited Bronze, Silver or Platinum award. 2 schools undertook this last year (Cameley Primary and Paulton Juniors) 5 more targeted schools in areas of higher need (St. Martin's Garden, St. Michael's Junior, Oldfield Park Junior, Castle Primary, St. Nicholas) are going through this year. Schools part fund this project. We will be looking to support this being self-funded in future. **Outcomes:** children are fully engaged in active, imaginative play, schools report better behaviour in the playground and that it enabled them to move forward with a range of different initiatives supporting social and emotional learning and participation.
- (6) 'Wheels for All' is a project to support disabled children to access adapted bikes with a range of opportunities after school and in the holidays. A temporary project officer has been recruited to develop this project. This is part funded by Sport and Active Leisure. It contributes to disabled children being more physically active. Fun days and taking part in Paralympic type activities will be run over the summer.
- (7) Finally the Play Team continue to support the Midsomer Norton Skate Park and were successful with their joint bid between the Somer Centre; Midsomer Norton Town Council and Wansdyke Play Association, to the Reward Fund to build a community run café in the Somer Centre and to further develop the park into a community run Skate Park.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for all Play Services.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 No direct consultation has taken place in respect of this briefing paper. Staff, agencies and service users are consulted about the development and provision of Play Services on a regular basis.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Impact on Staff; Human Rights are all areas for consideration if a future decision on Play Services is needing to be made.

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background	

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