



***Update to the Children, Young People &
Education Scrutiny Commission –
Support provided to Play Associations and
progress on sustainability planning***

Meeting date: 20th August 2024

Lead director: Laurence Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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1. Purpose of report

As requested at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 19th June, this report provides an update on the position for each of the nine Play Associations that manage the adventure playgrounds across the city. It contains details of the support offered and provided by Leicester City Council as well as the progress made by each Play Association, as reported by them to the council's Play Development Officer or to other officers of the council.

2. Summary

This report sets out the work to date, the support provided and the progress achieved by each Play Association in their planning for sustainability beyond April 2025.

3. Recommendations

As this is a report providing update information only, there are no recommendations made.

4. Report

In January 2024, individual meetings were held with the nine Play Associations that manage adventure playground sites across the city where they were informed of the council's intention to withdraw grant funding for supervised play services from April 2025.

On 25th March 2024 Play Associations were invited to briefings with the lead director and lead member to set out the timescales for the grant withdrawal and answer questions.

Commencing 19th April 2024, meetings were held with each Play Association's manager/senior worker and committee members to discuss what would be required in terms of sustainability planning and to offer ongoing support through the council's Play Development Officer, Tony McGovern.

At each meeting an offer was made to put the Play Association in touch with the council's VCSE Engagement Manager, Abi Battisto, to see what ideas she may have of opportunities available. Those who requested it were emailed a personal introduction to Abi who followed up by contacting each Play Association.

Following each meeting the Play Development Officer Tony contacted each manager/senior worker to ask what ongoing support they would like in terms of

frequency of meetings and whether they would prefer a face to face meeting, and online meeting or a telephone call.

Where opportunities have come to the council's attention that may benefit all or some of the Play Associations, these have been sent to managers/senior workers by email and they have been encouraged to share the information with committee members as appropriate. To date these have been:

- 20/3/24 – Notification of the Social Investment Funding Fair and Growth Accelerator Programme
- 23/4/24 – Link to Lloyds Bank Foundation funding opportunity (requested to be shared by Cllr Malik – unfortunately criteria excluded most providers)
- 24/4/24 – Notification of offer of support from the CEO at Play England
- 24/4/24 – Information regarding opportunities to set up and deliver wraparound childcare including the offer of one-to-one support from the Early Education Development team
- 30/4/24 – Email setting out the process for Play Associations to request one-off capital funding for items/work that would enable them to deliver their sustainability plan
- 15/5/24 – Link to LLR Integrated Care Board opportunity to join the VCSE Alliance (requested to be shared by Cllr Russell)
- 3/7/24 – Notification of the National Lottery Awards for All funding (Requested to be shared by Abi Battisto)

The following summarises the support activity to date with each Play Association:

Braunstone

Managed by: Braunstone Adventure Playground

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at Braunstone have not always been able to attend these meetings.

The VCSE Engagement Manager arranged an online meeting on 22/5/24 but no one attended the meeting.

During the following support conversations, Tony suggested/offered:

- Making contact with local schools to offer bespoke sessions to meet individual needs
- Visiting The Grove (B-Inspired) next door to the playground, to explain situation and seek advice and potential partnership opportunities
- To attend meetings with local organisations to provide support
- Direct help to develop their sustainability action plan
- To provide advice and read over any potential funding applications/bids
- To directly deliver bespoke sessions with children (for example forest school sessions, bike maintenance, life skills to embed numeracy/literacy into fun sessions linked to ASDAN, a nationally recognised accreditation scheme – Award Scheme Development & Accreditation Network). This would enable playground staff to shadow Tony, to develop their skills and demonstrate the potential for the playground to offer a programme to schools in terms of Alternative Provision.

Progress made to date by Braunstone:

- Made successful application for funding from the National Lottery for an arts worker for 3 years (and received advice from them on further funding sources)

- Made successful application for funding from the Postcode Lottery for a sports worker for 1 year
- Alongside other Play Associations, working with a consultant to make a joint Children in Need funding application for core funding, awaiting decision
- Sought additional committee members to diversify skills
- Submitted Sustainability Plan to lead director (16/7/24)

Goldhill

Managed by: Goldhill Play Association

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at Goldhill have fully engaged and attended all meetings offered.

Goldhill did not request a meeting with the VCSE Engagement Manager.

Given the advanced plans Goldhill already had in place, some of the options Tony was able to offer other Play Associations were not appropriate. However, they were made aware that any support they might need Tony would be glad to help. He did offer to directly deliver bespoke forest school sessions with children later in the year, should the staff team feel it would be helpful to develop their skills.

Progress made to date by Goldhill:

- Application made to Ofsted to register as an Independent School
- Development of website
- Secured funding from National Lottery for Million Hours project
- Completed outdoor classroom and decorating of other areas
- Developed partnership with What Cabin and Mowmacre to deliver Alternative Provision for schools from multiple sites
- A meeting was held on 28/6/24 with the council (Nicola) and the three partners in the Goldhill Partnership to discuss joint plans. A further meeting is planned with the lead director on 31/7/24.

Highfields

Managed by: Highfields Adventure Playground

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at Highfields have not always been able to attend these meetings.

The VCSE Engagement Manager has been in touch to arrange an online meeting but no date has been confirmed to date.

During the following support conversations, Tony suggested/offered:

- Making contact with local schools to offer bespoke sessions to meet individual needs
- To directly deliver bespoke forest school sessions with children to enable Highfields to develop their skills and generate income

Progress made to date by Highfields:

- Made links with University of Leicester to help with bid writing and provide support
- Alongside other Play Associations, working with a consultant to make a joint National Lottery funding application for core funding, awaiting decision
- Issued redundancy notices to staff at end of June 24

- Bids being prepared with the support of the University of Leicester to support core funding
- Planning to work with volunteers and a reduced staffing model to the end of March 2025, in the hope that funding bids are successful to operate beyond this.
- Planning to offer forest school sessions to local schools with support from the Play Development Officer

Mowmacre

Managed by: Mowmacre Young Peoples Play and Development Association

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at Mowmacre have fully engaged and attended all meetings offered.

The VCSE Engagement Manager has arranged an online meeting for 29/7/24.

During the following support conversations, Tony suggested/offered:

- Support with developing their plans with the Goldhill Partnership
- Making contact with local schools to offer bespoke sessions to meet individual needs
- To directly deliver bespoke sessions with children (for example forest school sessions and bike maintenance). This would enable playground staff to shadow Tony, to develop their skills and demonstrate the potential for the playground to offer a programme to schools in terms of Alternative Provision.

Progress made to date by Mowmacre:

- Attending Growth Accelerator programme run by De Montfort University
- Developed website to accept donations
- Contacted Tesco and Walkers Crisps to develop links
- Sought additional committee members to diversify skills
- Working on a funding bid with Sports England for a Sports Worker post
- Submitted a funding bid to National Lottery Awards for All fund, awaiting decision
- Developed partnership with Goldhill and What Cabin to deliver Alternative Provision for schools from multiple sites
- A meeting was held on 28/6/24 with the council (Nicola) and the three partners in the Goldhill Partnership to discuss joint plans. A further meeting is planned with the lead director on 31/7/24.

New Parks

Managed by: New Parks Adventure Playground

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at New Parks have fully engaged and attended all meetings offered.

Given their interest in developing a childcare model, support was offered by the council's Early Education Development team. A site visit is planned for 30/7/24 to provide pre-registration advice and guidance regarding Ofsted requirements.

The VCSE Engagement Manager arranged an online meeting on 29/2/24 where the VCSE infrastructure support pledge was discussed along with the forthcoming event engaging with businesses that may be a route to diversify income. They were added to the VCS mailing list for future comms.

During the following support conversations, Tony suggested/offered:

- Making contact with local schools to offer bespoke sessions to meet individual needs
- To directly deliver bespoke sessions with children (for example forest school sessions and bike maintenance). This would enable playground staff to shadow Tony, to develop their skills and demonstrate the potential for the playground to offer a programme to schools in terms of Alternative Provision.
- Support from a business contact at Company Shop to help develop their business plan

Progress made to date by New Parks:

- Attending Growth Accelerator programme run by De Montfort University
- Sought free legal advice for support with HR issues
- Sought support from Business Manager at New College and co-opted him onto committee for support with business planning
- Made contact with Company Shop representative
- Developed a business plan to open a pre-school setting, with a view to reducing adventure playground provision in the short term whilst the model is developed
- Attended a meeting with the lead director to discuss their sustainability plan and request support with capital funding

Northfields

Managed by: Northfields and District Play Association

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at Northfields have not always been able to attend these meetings.

The VCSE Engagement Manager arranged an online meeting on 29/2/24 but no one attended the meeting.

During the following support conversations, Tony suggested/offered:

- Offered to support writing lesson plans and schemes of work to assist them to sell sessions to schools, including Alternative Provision. Lesson plans could be around life skills courses, basic numeracy and literacy using creative ways of engaging children and young people, bushcraft activities and accreditation using the Youth Achievement Awards.
- Provided resources around accredited catering programme for young people to gain skills (sessions linked to ASDAN, a nationally recognised accreditation scheme – Award Scheme Development & Accreditation Network)
- To directly deliver bespoke sessions with children (for example forest school sessions and bike maintenance). This would enable playground staff to shadow Tony, to develop their skills and demonstrate the potential for the playground to offer a programme to schools in terms of Alternative Provision. Plans are in place for these sessions to take place over the summer period

Progress made to date by Northfields:

- Met with South Wigston High School and Whitehall Primary to discuss a 12-month contract to become their sole Alternative Provision provider.
- Waiting to hear back from the Crime Commissioner regarding the proceeds of crime funding.
- Developed a working relationship with Costco and McDonalds to receive left over food and drink items

- Developed and sent out flyer to all of the schools to promote the Alternative Provision services we are offering.
- Webpage is now up and running.
- In the process of arranging a meeting with Social Care Team to discuss becoming a Contact Point.

St Andrews

Managed by: St Andrews Play Association

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at St Andrews have not always been able to attend these meetings.

The VCSE Engagement Manager has arranged an online meeting for 23/7/24.

During the following support conversations, Tony suggested/offered:

- Working together with partner playgrounds to develop group sessions together
- Making contact with local schools to offer bespoke sessions to meet individual needs
- Thinking about developing an offer to take sessions directly to schools in order to overcome the limitations of the site

Progress made to date by St Andrews:

- Attending Growth Accelerator programme run by De Montfort University
- Exploring links with Leicester City Football Club and utilising the site
- Working with bid writers to explore options
- Approached Reaching People regarding joined up approach and fundraising opportunities
- Working on a joint bid to Reaching Communities fund on behalf of five Play Associations
- Sough advice on HR and redundancy issues
- Made contact with the owner/manager of HR4UK who has agreed to give one to one support to Playgrounds as and when it is needed

What Cabin

Managed by: St Matthews Children's Action Group

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at What Cabin have fully engaged and attended all meetings offered.

The VCSE Engagement Manager arranged an online meeting on 29/2/24 where the VCSE infrastructure support pledge was discussed along with a query about IDOX (previously NCVO database) funding. The Community Foundation was suggested as a potential funding route and they were added to the VCS mailing list for future comms.

During the following support conversations, Tony suggested/offered:

- Support with developing their plans with the Goldhill Partnership
- Making contact with local schools to offer bespoke sessions to meet individual needs

Progress made to date by What Cabin:

- Attending Growth Accelerator programme run by De Montfort University

- Developed partnership with Goldhill and Mowmacre to deliver Alternative Provision for schools from multiple sites
- Submitted funding bids to Garfield Weston and National Lottery
- Hosted visits from schools regarding Alternative Provision
- Made agreement with a tutor to hire the building during term time
- A meeting was held on 28/6/24 with the council (Nicola) and the three partners in the Goldhill Partnership to discuss joint plans. A further meeting is planned with the lead director on 31/7/24.

Woodgate

Managed by: Woodgate Adventure Playground

Support offered: The Play Development Officer agreed to make contact every two weeks via a telephone call. Staff at Woodgate have not always been able to attend these meetings.

The VCSE Engagement Manager arranged an online meeting on 20/2/24 where the VCSE infrastructure support pledge was discussed along with their plans for fundraising. The Community Foundation was suggested as a potential funding route and they were added to the VCS mailing list for future comms.

Given their current delivery of childcare, support was offered by the council's Early Education Development team to look at developing their business model, especially in the areas of wraparound care and moving to a full-time offer. The EED team has not yet had a response from Woodgate regarding their offer of support.

During the following support conversations, Tony suggested/offered:

- Making contact with local schools to offer bespoke sessions to meet individual needs
- To directly deliver bespoke sessions with children (for example forest school sessions and bike maintenance). This would enable playground staff to shadow Tony, to develop their skills and demonstrate the potential for the playground to offer a programme to schools in terms of Alternative Provision.
- To review their draft lesson plans to enable Woodgate to link their sessions to the ASDAN scheme (a nationally recognised accreditation scheme – Award Scheme Development & Accreditation Network) which makes their offer more attractive to schools for their children who may not be able to achieve other qualifications.

Progress made to date by Woodgate:

- Development of a questionnaire to find out about the local needs for childcare
- Contacted local schools to discuss Alternative Provision requirements
- Alongside other Play Associations, working with a consultant to make a joint National Lottery funding application for core funding, awaiting decision
- Issued redundancy notices to staff at end of June 24
- Developed a plan to reduce the supervised play hours from October 2024 in order to focus on childcare and Alternative Provision
- Developing a bid for funding from the Post Code Lottery

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

N/A (update report only)

5.2 Legal implications

N/A (update report only)

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

N/A (update report only)

5.4 Equalities Implications

N/A (update report only)

6. Background information and other papers:

N/A

7. Summary of appendices:

None

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

No

10. If a key decision please explain reason

In determining whether it is a key decision you will need consider if it is likely:

- to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates.
- to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working *in two or more wards in the City*.

Expenditure or savings will be regarded as significant if:

- (a) In the case of additional recurrent revenue expenditure, it is not included in the approved revenue budget, and would cost in excess of £0.5m p.a.;

- (b) In the case of reductions in recurrent revenue expenditure, the provision is not included in the approved revenue budget, and savings of over £0.5m p.a. would be achieved;
- (c) In the case of one off or capital expenditure, spending of over £1m is to be committed on a scheme that has not been specifically authorised by Council.

In deciding whether a decision is significant you need to take into account:

- Whether the decision may incur a significant social, economic or environmental risk.
- The likely extent of the impact of the decision both within and outside of the City.
- The extent to which the decision is likely to result in substantial public interest
- The existence of significant communities of interest that cannot be defined spatially.