



CYP Select Committee

Report title: Adventure Playground and Play Strategy Update

Date: 10 January 2022

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Sara Rahman

Outline and recommendations

Members are asked to consider how they may wish to become further involved with development of the Play Strategy, for example through a focused Members engagement event.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Following contract negotiations with Youth First and approval by Mayor and Cabinet (in Dec 2020) the management of adventure playground sites, including maintenance and repairs, became the internal responsibility of CYP in April 2021.

It was agreed to award an interim 12 month contract to Youth First to deliver adventure playground sessions across the APG sites, pending development of Lewisham's Play Strategy. This contract currently ends on 31 March 22.

Following a recent procurement process, Lewisham have awarded a contract to London Play to develop a comprehensive play strategy for the borough, to be co-designed with stakeholders including young people and families, between January and April 2022.

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on current arrangements for Adventure Play in Lewisham and gives timelines for completion of the boroughs new Play Strategy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are asked to consider how they may wish to become further involved with development of the Play Strategy, for example through a focused Members engagement event.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The right to play is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the importance of ensuring children have opportunities and spaces to play, where they feel safe and can enjoy themselves without adult direction, is now widely accepted.
- 3.2. In addition, Lewisham's Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) 2019-22 establishes how we will work to ensure that:
 - Children and young people have the best start in life and are protected from harm – as a partnership, we will support the right of every child to live in a safe and secure environment, free from abuse, neglect and harm
 - Children and young people have good physical and emotional health - we want our children, young people and their families to be healthy and active, confident and able to make healthy lifestyle choices and to have an understanding of how this can improve their development and emotional wellbeing
 - Children and young people develop, achieve and are ready for adulthood – enabling effective transition to adults services to ensure our young adults achieve the best possible outcomes
 - Children and young people feel listened to and respected - children in Lewisham should feel listened to, understood and respected.
- 3.3. Evidence ¹increasingly recognises the importance of play in child learning and development
- 3.4. A Play Strategy supports the delivery of our Early Help and Prevention Strategy and

¹ <https://www.playscotland.org/play/play-for-health/the-power-of-play/>

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public health outcomes around obesity and health and child development

- 3.5 A Play Strategy supports the outcomes of the Public Health Approach to Violence Reduction.

4. Adventure Playgrounds

- 4.1. Our five adventure playgrounds are:
- Honor Oak Adventure Playground
 - The Richard MacVicar Adventure Playground, Deptford
 - Dumps Adventure Playground
 - Ladywell Fields Adventure Playground
 - Home Park Adventure Playground.
- 4.2. The sites have long histories of passionate community involvement stretching back to the 1970s.
- 4.3. Whilst the Adventure Playgrounds remain popular sites within their local communities, delivery has been impacted by Covid restrictions and the play structures only have an estimated remaining lifespan of 1-3 years.
- 4.4. The sites all consist of a youth club unit and a series of wooden play structures designed to encourage risk taking and confidence building amongst young people. Historically the wooden structures were built and maintained by local communities and youth workers, but as insurance requirements have changed the expectation is now that only specialist providers can maintain and repair play structures.

History of Adventure Play Management

- 4.5. Prior to 2016 the Lewisham Youth Service, including Adventure Playgrounds, were delivered and managed internally. In 2016 the Lewisham Youth Service was mutualised and a contract awarded to Youth First.
- 4.6. In the period between Sept 2016 and 31 March 2021 Youth First were lease holders for the five adventure playground sites with responsibility for sessional delivery and maintenance and repairs.
- 4.7. Following contract negotiations with Youth First and approval by Mayor and Cabinet (in Dec 2020) the management of adventure playground sites, including maintenance and repairs, became the internal responsibility of CYP in April 2021.

Interim delivery model from 1ST April 2021

- 4.8. It was agreed to award a 12 month interim contract to Youth First to deliver adventure playground sessions across the APG sites, pending development of Lewisham's Play Strategy. This contract currently ends on 31 March 2022.
- 4.9. The agreed delivery model was for 384 sessions across the APG sites delivered as per the table below:

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1.1 Youth First will deliver 384 sessions across the APG sites as follows:

Site	The Dumps	Home Park	Ladywell	Honor Oak	Richard MacVicar	Total sessions
Number sessions per week	2	2	2	2	Core contract delivery site in 21/22 (Riverside refurb)	8
Weeks per year	48	48	48	48		48
Sessions per site	96	96	96	96		384
Term time sessions per week	84	84	84	84		336
Holiday sessions per week	12	12	12	12		48

4.10. This interim model was a reduction to the frequency and timing of sessions that had previously been provided at these sites, under the previous youth service contract (and pre-Covid). Whilst this was disappointing and frustrating for some residents and community groups, officers outlined a number of mitigating actions to the changes in delivery:

- Whilst the total number of session were reducing, all sites have stayed open and maintained a youth work offer for young people.
- Whilst Youth First contract hours reduced, we have diversified the range of support delivered by alternative providers and improved work with local communities to deliver new and additional provision for young people in Lewisham (such as establishment of the Lewisham Young Leadership Academy)
- We have continued to seek to increase and maximise activities, including holiday provision, through additional funding sources and partnerships such as the Holiday Activities and Food programme funded by the DfE.
- We continue to work with partners to secure additional funding to try and increase provision.

4.11. There are current challenges to delivery at Ladywell Fields APG due to significant roof damage. Work is underway to fully assess the implications of this but the site is temporarily out of use and alternative local provision has been identified by Youth First.

Delivery beyond 1st April 2022

4.12. Officers are currently developing proposals to ensure delivery at the APG sites continues beyond 31 March 2022; pending implementation of the recommendations from the new Play Strategy (see section 4 below). This may include seeking approval for limited (9 months or less) extensions to delivery and maintenance contracts, to ensure maintained delivery. All decisions will require final agreement and approval.

5. Play Strategy

5.1. A growing body of evidence supports the view that playing, throughout childhood, is not only an innate behaviour but also contributes to children’s quality of life, their well-being and their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. The type of environment for play is also important, having an impact on children’s experience, choices and relationships, both with other people and with the environment itself.

5.2. Given the financial challenges that the borough is facing, and the increasing level of need and inequality faced by children and families it is vital that the borough has a clear and developed vision and understanding of what play means in Lewisham to help prioritise and shape future decision making.

5.3. There is currently no Play Strategy in Lewisham. This means that there is limited connection between, or consideration of, the location, quality and accessibility of play

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for children and young people in the borough. The quality and accessibility of play in the borough is highly variable and there is no singular vision to support decision making on the future of play. There is limited understanding of the views of local residents and children on importance, quality and accessibility of play in the borough.

- 5.4. Whilst Adventure Playgrounds are a significant factor in Lewisham's response to Play, the strategy will be broader than APGs alone.

Strategy Delivery

- 5.5. Following a Procurement process, Lewisham have awarded a contract to London Play to develop a comprehensive play strategy for the borough, to be co-designed with stakeholders including young people and families, between January and April 2022.

- 5.6. We have asked for a Play Strategy that:

- Clearly highlights links to national and local corporate priorities
- Provides an overview of local demographics, need and assets
- Provides consideration/evidence of value and scope of play
- Is based on substantial and creative community and service user engagement
- Reviews/audits existing play within the borough
- Creates a vision for play in Lewisham
- Develops potential models of play and strategy action plan to support vision
- Creates a communication plan for strategy

- 5.7. London Play are an experienced and independent play charity. They have significant experience in engaging local communities about play and are also currently supporting the Royal Parks to develop a 5 year Play Strategy.

Next Steps

- 5.8. The project officially starts on 14 Jan 2022 and a timeline and project plan for delivery of the strategy is being finalised. There will be significant opportunity for community and member engagement with the strategy and the Lewisham Communications team are supporting this to ensure that engagement opportunities are as accessible as possible and members will be alerted to relevant future dates and events.
- 5.9. Short term contract extension discussions are underway and members will be updated on progress.
- 5.10. A report will be returned to members in July on the progress of the strategy.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. There are no financial implications for this briefing paper.
- 6.2. Normal financial process will be followed for any future decision making

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. There are no legal implications for this briefing paper.
- 7.2. Normal legal process will be followed for any future decision making

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8. Equalities implications

- 8.1. The developing Play Strategy will seek to better understand equalities implications of play

9. Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1. The developing Play Strategy will seek to better understand environmental implications of play

10. Crime and disorder implications

- 10.1. The developing Play Strategy will seek to better understand crime and disorder implications of play

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1. The developing Play Strategy will seek to better understand health and wellbeing implications of play

12. Report author(s) and contact

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