

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny
Committee – 8 December 2009

Subject: Play Strategy

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Purpose of report:

To inform members of the Play Strategy and its progress with particular reference to the big lottery funded Parktastic Project.

Recommendations:

That the contents are noted regarding the play strategy, the outcomes and the sustainability of Parktastic.

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Background Documents

Play Strategy Review

1. Background

*“Our vision is to enable Manchester’s children and young people access to local, safe, exciting and challenging places to play.
We aim to make enjoying play an everyday experience. Play is an essential part of children and young people’s lives.
Manchester acknowledges children and young people’s right to play.”*

1.1 The Manchester Play Strategy also states that we need to: -

- Ensure that all play provision is accessible
- Ensure that culturally appropriate opportunities are available
- Provide free play spaces and opportunities
- Make sure families, children and young people know what play opportunities are available for them in their community.

1.2 This aligns itself with the National Play Strategy 2008 whose vision for play is: -

- A variety of free supervised / non-supervised play opportunities.
- Local neighbourhoods that are safe interesting places to play.
- Safe accessible routes to play spaces for children and young people.
- Attractive, welcoming, well maintained parks and open spaces.
- Children and young people have a clear stake in public space and neighbours accept their play.
- Children and young people play in a way that respects other people and property.
- Children, young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces.
- Play spaces are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible to all local children and young people including disabled children and children from minority groups.

2. Strategic links

2.1 The Manchester Play Strategy is based on consultation with children and reflects children’s wishes to be able to play outdoors in parks and open play spaces and to feel safe whilst doing so. It is essential that the play strategy links with:

- The developing Think Family strategy in terms of universal services and the importance of play in nurturing children’s emotional well-being, physical development and health and children’s attainment.
- The healthy weight strategy in recognising the importance of outdoor physical activity in maintaining a healthy weight.
- The Community Strategy in making sure that children are safe, more resilient and able to fulfil their potential.
- The development of a workforce that enables the delivery of high quality services.

3. Play Team

- 3.1 Manchester continues to invest significantly in play provision, facilities and services for children and young people, providing substantial support for the voluntary sector who are a key partner in delivering play services across the city.
- 3.2 In 2009, Children’s Services total budget allocation for Manchester Play Team to support a diverse range of play services is £1,010,371. On top of this, Children’s Services oversees the management of two Big Lottery funded projects, the Parktastic and Play Builder (separate report) projects.
- 3.3 There are plans to restructure the play team to provide one strategic manager with a District Play Development Worker per district that will co-ordinate, commission and monitor play services locally.

4. Parktastic

- 4.1 The Parktastic play programme offers free, open-access, adventurous play opportunities for children and young people aged 5 to 14, in local parks and green spaces. The Big Lottery funds the project over a 2.5-year period that ends March 2010.
- 4.2 The play activities take place after school, at weekends and in the school holidays throughout the year. Manchester Young Lives, South Manchester Geographical Partnership, Parent Carers Consultative Group, Family Action, 4CT and Wythenshawe Community Initiative deliver the sessions in partnership with Manchester City Council.
- 4.3 Collectively the Parktastic Providers delivered over 2800 play sessions from October 2007 to date in 70 different play spaces across the city. 4700 individual children and young people have attended the play programme.
- 4.4 Parktastic activity can without doubt be mapped against the five outcomes for children as follows:

BEING HEALTHY	Parktastic helps to develop healthy bodies and minds, mental and physical resilience through the play opportunities provided. These child led experiences include tree climbing, mini sports, den building and numerous spontaneous childhood games.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendees experience at least 2 hrs per week active play in an outdoor environment • Opportunities to run, climb, build structures, make friends, build confidence and self esteem are always available • Many of these children would not usually attend an organised sport club or scheme.
STAYING SAFE	Parktastic encourages calculated risk taking and increased independence, confidence and self-esteem, can help children to maintain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of children reported that the play workers helped them if they were bullied at the session.

	their own safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% of children asked feel safer to play in parks and open spaces with adult supervision. • All Play workers are CRB checked and adhered to their safeguarding duties and have been trained in this area.
ENJOY & ACHIEVE	At Parktastic sessions children have fun and enjoy their play Through their enjoyment often achieve and develop skills sub-consciously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98% of children have played new games and had new experiences • Experience of fire play and tree climbing supported and promoted with park wardens and play workers • Children experience all play types.
MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	Through fostering respect for others, learning about their community and developing skills to make children valued members of society. Children have been fully involved in the design and delivery of the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children who attend do so voluntarily and are involved in positive activities • In Park Wood, Wythenshawe and St George Community Centre in Miles Platting the children have been instrumental in developing the play spaces they play in. • Children have been involved with community clean ups and wider community events through this project • The involvement of the Parktastic Parliament.
ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELL-BEING	Through the development of key skills which will aid them in maintaining their own economic and financial independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parktastic Jam • Empowerment • 50 locally employed Play workers

5. Parktastic Outcomes at end of Year 2.

5.1 **Outcome 1.** To increase the numbers of children and young people accessing play opportunities in parks and open spaces by 25% by the end of the portfolio

5.2 In the Enjoying Parks indicator a total of 4,710 children have participated across the portfolio of projects in Manchester. 2,891 new individual children and young people have accessed the play opportunities provided in year two. 43% of these children and young people attended more than three times. There were 24,444 total attendances in year 2, an increase of 14,921 (61%) from Year 1

5.3 In the Enjoy Together indicator 2,167 attendances were recorded overall, with 1,768 attendances in this year. This equates to an average of 14 children per

session this quarter. 156 sessions were delivered by PCCG in total. 60% of the children who attend the Enjoy Together sessions have a disability.

5.4 Outcome 2. To increase by 50 % the number of open access play sessions being delivered all year round (After school & at weekends) in areas of greatest need or where there is little provision.

5.5. 2,782 open access play sessions were provided in Manchester from October 2006 to September 2007. 3,602 open access play sessions were delivered in Manchester, October 2007 to September 2008 including Parktastic sessions. 4,277 open access play sessions were delivered in Manchester, October 2008 to September 2009 including Parktastic sessions. This equates to a 60% increase in open access play provision by year 2 being delivered all year round.

5.6. 1,687 additional open access play sessions have been delivered by this project in 70 different play spaces in all of 32 wards of the city throughout the project including 22 new sites this year. 32% of the play spaces are in the top 1% of most deprived wards in England. All are in the top 20 % most deprived wards in England. 77% of the sessions delivered were in the 10% most deprived wards in England.

5.7. Outcome 3. 10% of children accessing new play opportunities in parks and open spaces are new attendees with two or more risk factors or a disability

5.8. 5% of children and young people who attended the project have reported that they have a disability. 17 children are 'Looked After'. 40% children and young people are non-white British. 39% of the children attending the project live in wards that are in the top 1% of most deprived in England, 58% of children live in 10% and all wards are within the Top 20%. 41% of children and young people registered with Parktastic are female. 60% of the children who attend the Enjoy Together sessions have a disability.

5.9 Outcome 4. 30% of children and young people receiving play services report that they feel safe to play outside of home by the end of the project.

5.10. 37% of children sampled reported feeling safe in and out of the play sessions in parks and open spaces.

5.11 Outcome 5. 100% of play providers delivering portfolio projects will involve children and young people in design and delivery of the services they deliver and will demonstrate they meet aspects of the Manchester Quality Assurance Award

5.12 All providers have evidence of consulting and involving children in the delivery of the sessions, questionnaires, videos, photographs, booklets etc. All providers have committed to achieving Quality in Play accreditation by March 2010

6. Sustaining the work.

6.1 It is important that the work achieved to date is sustained in the future. Whilst the ideal is that children will feel safe to play in parks without adult supervision, the

reality is that parents and children are happier when appropriate adults supervise play activities.

- 6.2 The collaborative work with leisure services staff has been invaluable and many park wardens have accessed training and or coaching from qualified play staff. This has enabled them to understand the need for children to take risks in their play and some park wardens have taken an active role in sessions. This will assist sustainability for the future
- 6.3 The review of the play team has enabled a realignment of budgets and a scrutiny of current commissioning. This will enable some activity to be funded in the future. We have worked with the voluntary sector to encourage them to consider ways of match funding so that whatever we commission in the future will be match funded by the voluntary sector who can access different pots of funding.
- 6.4 We are working with health colleagues to look at their commissioning arrangements to consider opportunities related to health targets such as healthy weight, emotional well being etc.
- 6.5 The play strategy is making links with other relevant strategies to ensure a joined up approach and to maximise any opportunities.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Play in Manchester continues to lead the way. Our support via Play England confirms that Manchester is forward thinking in its play strategy and has performed well in delivering the Parktastic programme. The Play Partnership is well established and is developing its membership to ensure all parties consider play in their planning.
- 7.2 Play England will be delivering a 'Play Shaper' for 20 key decision makers involving senior managers and elected members. They suggest that a 'Play Champion' is nominated and in many local authorities that is an elected member. The role would be about raising the profile of play and championing activity. Members will be asked to consider this.
- 7.3 The play team have attended a number of seminars and workshops both regionally and nationally and have been asked to present the good practice in Manchester. Work will continue to ensure the play strategy is embedded and that the learning from the Parktastic programme continues.

Parktastic Case Studies

Case study 1

Child one, age 14, attends Blackley Recreational Park and Tweedle Hill Park. Child One has been attending at Tweedle Hill since April 09, a few weeks after we started; he has attended on a regular basis and then followed the team at Blackley Recreational grounds. When Child one initially attended he stayed on the peripherals of the play activities and was initially difficult to engage. However, with a variety of risky and fun activities he was able to engage in activities he felt were reflective of his age.

As time went on, child one started to emerge as an informal volunteer; he would stop fights, encourage positive behaviour in younger children and seemed to be an advocate for his community.

As he has built relationships with the workers, he has discussed some of the difficulties he has at home and school, and has expressed interest in working for 4CT either as a Junior Playworker or in the future as a sessional playworker.

During his time with us, there has been a dramatic change in child one's behaviour and his level of engagement with ourselves and school etc. He has shown a great work ethic and has been a vital part of the session held in Blackley. As a result of Parktastic Zach is embedded in the community more, has developed new skills, committed to a project over 7 months, developed brilliant play opportunities with younger children.

Case study 2

The family of 4 children are aged from 4 to 9, they attend Crumpsall Park. The family joined us in March 2008 and have consistently attended since then. The family consists of 2 boys and 2 girls. The whole family were initially quite reserved at first, and found some of the activities a little daring for them. As some of the children are under 8, the mother attends with them and we thought this might be a factor.

However, as we allowed the children to develop their own games, activities etc, we found the children were as daring as any of the other children and the mother eventually helped us to facilitate some of the activities. As we developed a relationship with the family, we found the mother was quite isolated from any support from family, friends or her partner and saw Parktastic as a chance for her to feel valued as well as her children develop relationships with adults outside of a school setting.

As the relationship developed, the children became very fond of the workers and the mother expressed an interest in working with children. I discussed the skills she had developed so far and my willingness to give her a character reference. As a result of the Parktastic sessions, the children were able to access varied and quality play and develop their confidence and communication skills whilst the mother was able to develop her own skills and is now a teaching assistant at a local school.